

The Problem of the Taxon 'Myth' as a Typology of Religion in Ancient Egypt: Phenomenology Re-visited.

Diana Brown

Ph.D.

University of Edinburgh

2008



for my son

Abstract

This thesis centres on the problem of the taxon 'myth' as a typology of religion in ancient Egypt. The problem is partially resolved if the word 'myth' is replaced by the term 'text' or 'narrative'. The difference at first may appear insignificant given that 'myth' is interpreted as a story which concerns superhuman beings. Similarly, the texts and iconography of ancient Egypt depict divine kingship supported by the gods and goddesses of Egypt. Literature research on the phenomenology of religion revealed that 'myth' carried an overlay of 'falseness', a concept absent in the neutral terms, 'text' or 'narrative'. In the myth-religion partnership, when 'myth' is classified as a typology of religion, it is encumbered with the polemic 'false'. 'My' religion is true but 'your' religion is 'myth'; it is false. Further literary research on Egyptian 'religion' revealed the absence of the modern concept of religion in the form of doctrines or communal worship. Egyptian beliefs were incorporated within a socio-political context in which the king, who symbolised the state of Egypt, maintained order. Other overlays are identified in the thesis: Plutarch's Greek overlay on the characters of the Egyptian deities, Isis and Osiris is one; the Greek so-called origin of the true-false dichotomy of *mythos* is another. Consequently, Egyptian beliefs were misrepresented by an interpretation that failed to give justice to the beliefs of the ancient Egyptians.

To resolve the various issues identified and to hear the voice of the ancient Egyptians through their texts and iconography, the research method employed in the thesis demanded rigorous scrutiny of the secondary literature of religion, phenomenology and Egyptian literature, history, culture, kingship, 'religion' and 'myths'. Egyptian primary texts, iconography and archaeology provided crucial source material for comparison as did contemporary critiques from scholars in the fields of religion, phenomenology and Egyptology. The aim of the thesis is comprehension of Egyptian texts 'as if', that is, from the insider's perspective.

When phenomenology is re-visited, resolution of the issues is achieved; *epoché*, empathy and a subjective-objective method are the tools for understanding the Egyptian ethos. Scrutiny of the literature of classical pioneers of phenomenology established that the common element of similarity, which classifies religious data into universal typologies of religion, was the 'essence' of religion. The latter,

identified as the 'essence' of Christianity, was another layer superimposed on the so-called 'religion' of ancient Egypt. To extricate the meaning intended by the ancient Egyptian texts and iconography, a new hermeneutic of 'myth' is proposed. A Case Study draws together the salient points of the research into a new approach that applies a phenomenological method. Translations and interpretations of different types of Egyptian texts are compared and tested. When ancient Egyptian culture is 'experienced' through the lens of phenomenology, Egyptian kingship is seen as the symbolic link between the gods and the Egyptian people, a fact demonstrated throughout this thesis and tested in the Case Study which finalises the argument.

Declaration

I, Diana Brown, declare that this thesis has been composed by me and that the work is my own.

Signed

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to acknowledge Jim Hutcheson, Ann MacPherson and Hanan Atalla for their constant support, sometimes silent and unobtrusive, during the vagaries of my research. I also acknowledge and give thanks to my supervisors, in particular, Professor James Cox, a phenomenologist of substance; one who listens and is heard. The structured wisdom of Dr. Hannah Holtschneider also merits my thanks – her positive critiques motivated my research journey. I must also thank another of my supervisors, Professor Nick Wyatt, now retired. He first introduced me to the Egyptian ethos, now an ongoing presence in my life. Finally, I would like to thank the unfailing support of Ann Fernon, formerly of New College, now at the Postgraduate Office.

Abbreviations

Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead	BD
Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts	PT
Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings (1-3)	AEL
Ancient Egyptian Literature: History and Forms	AELHF
Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament	ANET
Bucknell Review	BR
Culture and Religion	CR
Göttinger Miszellen	GM
Harvard Theological Review	HTR
History of Religions	HR
International Journal of Philosophical Studies	IJPS
Journal of the American Academy of Religion	JAAR
Journal of American Oriental Society	JAOS
Journal of Egyptian Archaeology	JEA
Journal of Near Eastern Studies	JNES
Method and Theory in the Study of Religion	MTSR
Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin	MMAB
Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament	SJOT

Table of Contents

<i>Abstract</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>Author's Declaration</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	<i>vi</i>
Chapter One	
1. Introduction	1
1.1 The Issue	1
1.2 The Problem of Egyptian 'Religion'	4
1.3 The Problem of the Term 'Myth'	5
1.4 The Problem of Phenomenology of Religion	7
1.5 Example of the Issue	8
1.6 Research Methods	12
1.7 Chapters Overview	15
Chapter Two	
2. Development of the Theory of Myth in the History and Phenomenology of Religion	20
2.1 Introduction	20
2.2 Phenomenology of Religion: Lack of Consensus	21
2.3 Diverse Methodologies: the Critiques	24
2.4 Classical Phenomenologists: the Selection	26
2.5 William Brede Kristensen (1867-1953)	28
2.5.1 Kristensen: 'Categories of Religion'	28
2.5.2 Identification of the Issues	31
2.5.3 Myth: Category of Religion	36
2.6 Gerardus van der Leeuw (1890-1950)	40

2.6.1	Van der Leeuw: 'Ideal Types'	40
2.6.2	Identification of the Issues	45
2.6.3	Myth: 'Ideal Type' of Religion	47
2.7	Mircea Eliade (1907-1986)	54
2.7.1	Eliade: 'Hierophanies'	54
2.7.2	Identification of Issues	62
2.7.3	Myth: 'Hierophany' of Religion	67
2.8	Summary	69
Chapter Three		
3.	Plutarch's <i>De Iside et Osiride</i>: 'Myth' Re-visited	73
3.1	Introduction	73
3.2	Plutarch's <i>De Iside et Osiride</i> : an Overview	76
3.3	Plutarch's <i>De Iside et Osiride</i> : an Evaluation	79
3.4	Plutarch's <i>De Iside et Osiride</i> : Chapters Twelve to Twenty	81
3.5	The Pyramid Texts: an Introduction	91
3.5.1	Opening the Mouth Ritual: 'O Horus who is Osiris, the King'	95
3.5.2	The Pyramid Texts: Royal Primogeniture	98
3.5.3	The Royal Rebirth: Isis, one of Many	101
3.6	Summary	108
Chapter Four		
4.	'Myth' Re-examined: the Religion Connection	111
4.1	Introduction	111
4.2	Overview of the Issues	112
4.3	The Problem of Definitions	116
4.4	The Problem of 'Truth'	117
4.5	The Problem of Language: <i>Mythologia</i> , <i>Mythos</i> , <i>Logos</i>	122

4.6	The Problem of Change: <i>Mythos</i> and <i>Logos</i>	126
4.6.1	The Pre-Socratic Xenophanes	127
4.6.2	The Pre-Socratic Parmenides	128
4.6.3	The Pre-Socratic Heraclitus	129
4.6.4	Fragment 25: Euripides or the Sophist Critias	130
4.6.5	Plato: the Rational Atheist or Wise Dialectic	132
4.7	Myths and the Egyptian Perspective	135
4.8	Summary	139

Chapter Five

5.	<i>On ‘Myth’ and Phenomenology – a Reconstruction</i>	142
5.1	Introduction	142
5.2	The Myth-Religion Issue – Contemporary Critiques	147
5.2.1	Hans H. Penner: Myth Provides False Information	147
5.2.2	Russell T. McCutcheon: The Insider-Outside, <i>Emic-Etic</i> Liaison	148
5.2.3	Phenomenology, the Law, ‘Beyond a Reasonable Doubt’	152
5.3	Phenomenology Revisited: ‘Infinite Need of Correction’	154
5.3.1	Assign Names to the Texts: Naming, Classification, Empathy	155
5.3.2	<i>Epoché</i> , Clarification, Comprehension, Testimony	159
5.4	Scholars ‘do’ Phenomenology: an Overview	162
5.5	Phenomenology of Egyptian ‘Texts’: a Re-Appraisal	168
5.6	Summary	173

Chapter Six

6.	<i>A Case Study</i>	175
-----------	----------------------------	------------

A New Hermeneutic of ‘Myth’ in an Egyptian Socio-political Context

6.1	Introduction	175
6.2	Framework for a New Hermeneutic of the Taxon Myth	178

6.3	For a Socio-Political Status of the Taxon ⁴ Myth ¹	180
6.4	Phenomenology of Egyptian Texts	182
6.4.1	Naming and Classifying Types: ‘Funerary’ Texts	183
6.4.2	Naming and Classifying Types: ‘Transfiguration’ Texts	185
6.4.3	Naming and Classifying Types: ‘Instruction’ Texts	198
6.5	Phenomenology from the Inside: ‘Myth’ Revisited Again	200
6.5.1	The God and his Unknown Name of Power	204
6.5.2	Phenomenology and an Incantation ‘Myth’ Re-Appraised	209
6.5.3	Horus Cippi, Horus and Kingship, ‘Myth’: the Final Analysis	212
6.6	Summary	216
<i>Chapter Seven</i>		
7. Conclusion		219
7.1	Issues Identified	219
7.1.1	Issues Overview	221
7.1.2	Periphery Issues	224
7.2	Phenomenology Revisited	228
7.2.1	Phenomenology: The Socio-Political Question	232
7.2.2	Phenomenology: The ‘Myth’ Question	234
<i>Bibliography</i>		238
<i>Appendices</i>		257

Chapter One

Introduction

Examine every matter, that you may understand it.¹

1.1 The Issue

The taxon 'myth' is the subject of my research. The key issue in my thesis concerns the phenomenological classification of the term 'myth' as a typology of 'religion' in ancient Egypt. My first task therefore is to research the literature of the classical phenomenologists who first determined the method of classifying religious data into universals of different 'types'. Equally important are critiques from contemporary writers in the field who challenge not only 'myth' as a category of religion but also the common element for identifying religious data, the 'essence' of religion. The implication is that the so-called universal 'essence' which defines all religious categories is the same 'essence' which identifies the 'myths' of ancient Egypt as a typology of religion.

The nucleus of the issue relates to the context in which the term 'myth' is understood and defined by Egyptologists and Phenomenologists of religion.² I posit that the taxon 'myth', rather than being interpreted as religion-centred in ancient Egypt, may be identified within a socio-political genre which, I propose, is human-centred. In this context I research the interrelated role of the so-called 'myths' embedded in the narratives and texts of ancient Egypt with the socio-political office of kingship. Within this framework, I offer not only a new hermeneutic of 'myth' but also a new approach to the phenomenological method of classifying typologies of religion, in particular the taxon 'myth'.

¹ The *Instructions of Ankhesheshonq*, 6.7, British Museum, Papyrus 10508. Quoted in M.Lichtheim, *AEL*. Vol.3:164, (Berkley: University of California Press, 1980).

² For the paucity of texts or narratives that may be described as 'myth', see John Baines, 'Egyptian Myth and Discourse: Myth, Gods, and the Early Written and Iconographic Record', 81, *JNES*, 50, 1991:81-105. For a detailed critique of the word 'myth', see Russell T. McCutcheon, 'Myth', in *Guide to the Study of Religion*, eds., Willi Braun, Russell T. McCutcheon, (London: Cassell, 2000), 190-208. See also Mark C. Taylor, ed., *Critical terms for Religious Studies*, (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1998). The absence of a chapter on 'myth' as a critical term in Religious Studies is significant.

Some anomalies which concern the taxon 'myth' are significant. For example, the true-false dichotomy of the typology 'myth' in partnership with the construct term 'religion' is one incongruity. The ambivalent concept of 'myth' appears to challenge its classification as a category of religion given that the construct term 'religion', not only concerns the faith or beliefs of the adherent, but also signifies monotheism, the communal worship of one god. When a false encumbrance is imposed on the term 'myth', adherents today deny that *their* sacred story, which they regard as 'true', is 'myth'. The meaning therefore of the term 'myth' seems at variance with the ethos of the beliefs of religion and appear as 'false friends'.

Equally, the myth-religion partnership may be a contradiction in terms when considered within the context of the key phenomenological principle, the autonomy of the adherent. Given that *epoché* requires the absence of any distinction between an adherent's story and 'myth', whether true or false. If it is designated 'false', then the autonomy of the adherent is invalidated. Similarly, when an Egyptian text or narrative is named or classified as 'myth', that it is 'false', then the voice of the ancient Egyptian is unlikely to be 'heard'.³ In the end, the meaning intended by the Egyptians in their texts or narratives, is distorted. Equally, the fundamental principles of phenomenology are jeopardised.

Two of the key principles of the phenomenological method are empathy and *epoché*; the latter aims to bracket opinions, preconceptions, and biases in order to compare and understand the beliefs of the 'other'. The absence of empathy and *epoché* therefore, even in part, signifies that the inner voice of the phenomenologist of religion is heard rather than the validating voice of the adherent. The autonomy of the adherent was a key contribution to the phenomenology of religion by W. Brede Kristensen. James L. Cox explained succinctly the significance of its absence.

If a researcher cannot accede to such a testimony, [the believer's validation] empathy has not been utilized, the religion has been described and interpreted in ways that are foreign to the believers, and the religious reality has been negated.⁴

³ I distinguish the difference between Egyptian texts as a phrase or paragraph, or an account which records a sequence of events, with a narrative as an account or story with a beginning, middle and end in the modern sense. The premise throughout this thesis is to understand the texts, contextually, from the Egyptian perspective. For a comparative analysis between a textual and contextual approach, see John P. Burris, 'Text and Content in the Study of Religion', *MTSR*, 15, 2003:28-47.

⁴ James L. Cox, *A Guide to the Phenomenology of Religion*, (London: The Continuum Publishing Group, 2006), 112.

Wilfred Cantwell Smith, the comparative religion scholar, deconstructed the traditional form of religion and proposed the more neutral, bi-polar concepts of 'faith' and 'cumulative tradition'.⁵ Notwithstanding his contribution to comparative religion, he also struggled with the application of *epoché*. Smith described his great effort to overcome the difficulties of bracketing his own views. His aim was to understand ancient Egyptian beliefs, in particular the sky goddess Nut. He was impressed by the history, art, architecture, and by the order that the Egyptian people attained or created in, for example, political life. He was also impressed by their 'religious' life but admitted he did not understand why the ancient Egyptians 'held that the sky is a cow'.

Smith elaborated on the positive reasons why the Egyptians would consider the sky as a cow and reasoned: 'Now you and I know that the sky is not a cow ... the ancient Egyptians were simply wrong when they said that it was'. Smith suggested that we may think the statement 'was not false but meaningless'. Or if you or I said that the sky was a cow then 'we should be either wrong or absurd', although this does not imply that we think the Egyptians are wrong or absurd. He suggested that 'we should listen doubly hard to the different perceptions of the world' and concluded: 'Is the sky a cow? It would not be true if I said it; but from this it does not follow that it was not at least partially true when they did'.⁶ The striving to understand is present in Smith's dialogue with himself, and, following Kristensen, for Smith, certainty was elusive.

Equally important are the diverse theories of a definition of the term 'myth', given that various theories may be proposed not only by scholars within the field but also by phenomenologists of religion. M. L. Satlow reduced the many into one theory: 'In any given analysis, then, "myth" – in theory – becomes whatever we say it is'.⁷ Whether or not resolution of the issue, even in part, rests within the actual word itself, the word 'myth' also forms part of my research. Rather than attempting to jettison the pejorative baggage accumulated over time by the word 'myth', it may

⁵ For an overview, see Wilfred Cantwell Smith, 'Comparative Religions: Whither and Why?', in *History of Religions: Essays in Methodology*, eds., M. Eliade and J. M. Kitagawa, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), 31-58; Kenneth Cracknell, ed., *Wilfred Cantwell Smith: A Reader*, (Oxford: Oneworld, 2001).

⁶ Wilfred Cantwell Smith, 'The Sky is a Cow', 47-49, in *Wilfred Cantwell Smith*, 46-51.

⁷ M.L. Satlow, 'Disappearing Categories: Using Categories in the Study of Religion', 292, *MTSR*, 17, 2005:287-298.

be necessary to reconfigure this term if only to accommodate the criterion of the believer's validation. Given that the core of my argument concerns the concept of 'myth' as a typology of religion in ancient Egypt, I propose using the word 'text' or 'narrative' for the term 'myth' but only in contexts where the meaning intended by the authors of my research literature is uncompromised.

My aim throughout my thesis is to introduce different types of ancient Egyptian texts, not only as an example of the thesis issue being discussed, but also to demonstrate positive aspects of phenomenology. First, the comment by the classical phenomenologist, Gerardus van der Leeuw: 'The essentially human always remains essentially human, and is, as such, comprehensible'.⁸ The second is from an Egyptian priest. In the *Instructions of Ankhesheshonq*, the text follows van der Leeuw's human-centred approach as if in response to the universal human question, 'How shall I live?': 'Examine every matter, that you may understand it'.⁹ Although neither statement is a 'religious' statement the premise of both is towards human understanding which links the two statements within a timeframe of nearly one thousand five hundred years. Equally, the aim of phenomenologists of religion is an undertaking to comprehend the beliefs of others. To this end, the following sections demonstrate problems which link to the main issue.

1.2 The Problem of Egyptian 'Religion'

Lewis Spence described the so-called Egyptian 'religion' in 1915: 'The group of beliefs which constituted what *for convenience sake* is called the Egyptian religion' (my emphasis).¹⁰ Even at this early period not only was the term 'religion' problematic to Spence, he was aware also of the convenience of applying the term 'religion' to the traditional values of ancient Egypt, if only because of the lack of an alternative word. Decades later Michael Rice remarked in 1990, that there is no such thing as "Egyptian religion" because to an Egyptian, the concept of *religion* would be meaningless. He continued: 'The society which grew up in Egypt in the third millennium was entirely god-centred: it was thus theocratic and theocentric in a quite

⁸ Gerardus van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1938), 675.

⁹ See previous 1.

¹⁰ Lewis Spence, *Egypt: Myths and Legends*, (London: Studio Editions, 1994. 1st publ. Harrap, 1915), 1.

literal sense'.¹¹ In 2001, Nicolas Wyatt described a similar issue: 'We cannot speak of "Egyptian religion" in the singular, because the phenomenon we call 'religio', for which the Egyptians had no specific term, was variously conceived in the different groups making up Egyptian society'.¹²

I conclude with a more detailed account by John Baines, Professor of Egyptology at Oxford University. He agreed that what is termed Egyptian "religion" cannot be detached from that society's social order, that the Egyptians 'had no single term for "religion" that would have facilitated any discussion of such issues'. He argued: 'Religious beliefs were essentially and largely unquestioned presuppositions underlying the conduct of life'.¹³ Although he agreed that society interacted with religious beliefs they could not be seen in exclusively social terms. Nonetheless, society was seen in terms of the gods, the king, the people and the *akhs*. The latter signified those Egyptians who had been transfigured from an earthly existence into their new 'spiritual' form.¹⁴ In the end, Baines concluded: 'From the vast span of times I have surveyed, the evidence for everyday religious beliefs and practice is sparse and fragmentary, and its organization may defy analyses'.¹⁵ It may be concluded that the concept of an Egyptian 'religion', in the modern sense, is challenged and thus merits further research.

1.3 The Problem of the Term 'Myth'

On the subject of the term 'myth', in 1999, Bruce Lincoln acknowledged there was a problem of definition. He declined to offer yet another definition: 'It would be nice to begin with a clear and concise definition of "myth" but unfortunately that can't be done.'¹⁶ Wyatt's comment in 2001 encapsulates one aspect of the issue: 'The term "myth" has endured a confused perception in recent

¹¹ Michael Rice, *Egypt's Making: The Origins of ancient Egypt, 5000-2000 BC*, (London: Routledge, 1991), 219.

¹² Nicolas Wyatt, *Space and Time in the Religious Life of the Near East*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 27-28.

¹³ John Baines, 'Society, Morality, and Religious Practice', 124, in *Religion in Ancient Egypt*, ed., Byron E. Shafer, (London: Routledge, 1991), 123-200.

¹⁴ Baines, 'Society, Morality', 129.

¹⁵ Baines, 'Society, Morality', 199.

¹⁶ Bruce Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship*, (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 1.

years. On the one hand there has been a long tradition of hostile intent towards it, typical for the most part, curiously, among biblical scholars and systematic theologians.¹⁷ Rather than a theological or religious genre of the term 'myth', Geraldine Pinch recently proposed a cultural element: 'Myth was one of the elements of Egyptian culture that most impressed and influenced contemporary civilisations. Stories and symbols crossed national boundaries and were reinterpreted to suit their new settings'.¹⁸

The issue of the meaning of the term 'myth' continues today, although it does not emerge in a vacuum. Many scholars attribute the first impulse of the term *mythos* to the Greeks. Whether or not the true-false dichotomy of the term has been taken out of its original context is also a subject of research. Various influences on the interpretation of the Greek word *mythos* over time, historically, politically and philosophically, together with a myriad of literature, have offered theories of the definition of the taxon 'myth'. Can the term 'myth', or a story, text, or narrative, be understood outside of its own cultural context? If my research reveals the absence of a correlation between the theory of 'religion' in a modern sense and the beliefs of the ancient Egyptians, then a clear issue is evident. Moreover, when the term 'myth' is in partnership with the term 'religion', each term may superimpose their different nuances, one on the other. For example, whose religion is 'false' when in association with the term 'myth'?

The terms 'myth' and 'religion' therefore appear as unresolved issues of long-standing duration. When the terms are superimposed on the texts of ancient Egypt, the problem is perpetuated. Nonetheless, the issue is not with the term 'religion' *per se*, the fact of the function of religion is evidenced in, for example, the churches, synagogues, temples and mosques and other places of communal worship. I posit that the term 'religion' imposes a value judgement on the term 'myth'. G.S. Kirk suggested that the religion-myth partnership are false friends: 'It will be wise to reject from the outset the idea that myth and religion are twin aspects of the same subject...'¹⁹ My particular concern is with the so-called phenomenological

¹⁷ Nicolas Wyatt, 'The Mythic Mind', 3, *SJOT*, 15, 2001:3-56.

¹⁸ Geraldine Pinch, *Egyptian Myth*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 13.

¹⁹ G.S. Kirk, *Myth: Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Others Cultures*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 31.

partnership between the problem terms 'religion' and 'myth', when these terms are imposed on the cultural values of ancient Egypt.

1.4 The Problem of Phenomenology of Religion

It is important at this stage to provide a brief summary of the method which classifies religious data into universal categories of religion, before presenting what I propose are the key issues of my thesis. First, empirical data is collated then grouped into religious or non-religious phenomena. The religious data are identified by a common 'essence' of religion then grouped into universal typologies of religion; non-religious data is discarded. Next, the classical phenomenologists who first classified religious data into groups of similarities, classified 'myths' as a typology of religion, another example is the category 'kingship'. The early phenomenologists proposed a rigorous method which would ensure identity of the element of commonality, the 'essence' of religion.

For example, one of the principles to which researchers must *strive*, is the exercise of *epoché*, that is, to suspend judgements and to bracket previous theories or opinions. Only then is the religious 'essence' revealed to the researcher. Equally, prior distinctions between the real and apparent, true or false should be discarded. Only then are the religious phenomena allowed to speak for themselves within the bracketed consciousness of the researcher. To use empathy, to intuit the essential meanings of the phenomena from their structures, completes the procedure, but only after a final re-testing of the phenomenological process.²⁰

When this method is applied to so-called Egyptian 'myths' two issues are identified. First, the true-false dichotomy of the term 'myth', illustrated in the previous section, was at variance with the phenomenological dictum, that any prior distinctions between the true and the false should be discarded by the researcher. Second, the *absence* of a belief system in ancient Egyptian texts, which is congruent with the contemporary meaning of today's concept of religion, challenges the autonomy of the adherent. There is also the issue of the 'essence' of religion. If the researcher seeks to distinguish the 'religious' from the 'non-religious' using *epoché*

²⁰ For a more detailed account of the various models of the phenomenological method see James L. Cox, *Expressing the Sacred*, (Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1996), 15-21. For the application of the method, see 24-41.

and empathy, and applies these principles to Egyptian texts, then I propose that the result of the appraisal would be 'non-religious'. For this reason, the issue of the 'essence' of religion, the element of commonality which signifies whether or not the Egyptian data is 'religious', requires critical analysis.

W. Brede Kristensen, one of the classical phenomenologists in my research, acknowledged the difficulties inherent in the phenomenological method, in that to understand other religions, full understanding was a probability only, certainty was more elusive. I quoted earlier the experience of Cantwell Smith. Nonetheless, the phenomenological method, although rigorous, fails to consider Egyptian narrative texts from *their viewpoint*, given that the adherent's validation is central to the principles of phenomenology.

If the phenomenologist seeks to understand a 'religion' that is foreign, it is important that he or she views or 'experiences' it through the auspices of the adherent. If the phenomenologist is unable to comprehend fully the religion of the adherent because various true-false distinctions are made, then the consequence may be the overlay of one religion or culture over another. Plutarch's Greek overlay on the so-called Egyptian myth of Osiris and Isis is one example offered. A distortion of the adherent's reality is the ultimate result.

1.5 Example of the Issue

To classify not only the cultural beliefs of the ancient Egyptians under the rubric of the construct term 'religion', but also to include the narratives which describe their beliefs within the parameters of the pejorative term 'myth', invalidates the meaning intended by the ancient Egyptians. It also negates the basic premise of the phenomenological method discussed earlier. Given the scholarly consensus of the general definition of the term 'myth' as a 'story that concerns gods or superhuman beings', little mention if any, is made of the *measure* of the divine presence in 'mythic' narratives. Is a *brief* reference or the name of a deity or deities within the structure of an Egyptian narrative sufficient content to name the narrative a 'mythic' composition, or a story that concerns superhuman beings? Once the form of a deity is established, the Egyptians formulated a story to explain its origin, characteristics

and function and, ‘in this process the god received a name’.²¹ In Ancient Egypt the names of the gods and goddesses identify and provide the characteristics which signify their role in a given drama. The naming process therefore was not only an important source of information in ancient Egyptian beliefs, ‘the name was an integral part of the personality’.²²

For example, in some contexts, when the names of the Egyptian gods Horus or Osiris are mentioned briefly within a text, there is an inherent understanding between the scribes and the ‘divine reader’ of the texts that the knowledge is conveyed in the name, that any further expansion may be superfluous.²³ Consequently, it may be a story about the gods but the divine content is inferred rather than made explicit.²⁴ A case in point is the text inscribed on the walls of a ‘house of eternity’ or on the papyrus, *Coming Forth by Day*, enfolded within the bandages of a mummified ‘being’ passing into the Otherworld. The words are for divine eyes only. The king or those seeking entry into the Otherworld are transfigured into the god Osiris by the simple expedient of being named or depicted in the form of Osiris.²⁵ The divine names of Horus and Osiris within a narrative signify that the context concerns the function and power of kingship.²⁶

²¹ David P. Silverman, ‘Divinity and Deities in Ancient Egypt’, 23-25, in *Religion in Ancient Egypt*, 7-87.

²² Silverman, ‘Divinity and Deities’, 28.

²³ For the importance of the naming principle, see R.O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, (London: British Museum Press, 1989), 137. Knowledge of the names is required not only of the deities, the ‘spiritual beings’ encountered on their journey to the Otherworld but also the names of the places and the technical terms of objects they encountered. Spell 148: ‘I know you and I know your name. I know the name of the seven cows and their bull’. See also Barry Kemp, *How to Read the Egyptian Book of the Dead*, (London: Granta Publications, 2006).

²⁴ David P. Silverman, ‘Textual Criticism in the Coffin Texts’, 38, in *Religion and Philosophy in Ancient Egypt*, ed., William Kelly Simpson, (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University, 1989), 29-46. Silverman noted that in one version the spell “Ra-Horakhty” is mentioned by name, while in another, the name is replaced with the epithet “lord of the horizon” (CT1040 VII 289b). See also Jan Assmann, ‘Death and Initiation in the Funerary Religion of Ancient Egypt’, 136, in *Religion and Philosophy in Ancient Egypt*, 135-159. Assmann explains that funerary literature should be qualified as ‘esoteric’ in the sense that it was not meant to be seen by the eyes of mortals. Thus when texts refer briefly to a deity, or, name the god in general terms as the ‘Lord of the Horizon’, the scribal priest would assume *the gods had full knowledge* (my emphasis). Once the tomb is closed the texts are for the eyes of the gods only.

²⁵ See Kemp *BD*, 32.

²⁶ This is a simplified statement of a complex theme discussed in detail in chapter four. See also Kemp, *BD*, 27, and his comment that the Osiris myth was not simply a myth about the afterlife but also a story about Horus, the son of Osiris.

The name Horus, given to the king at his coronation, signifies that he possesses the full power and authority of the royal god Horus. Similarly, the name Osiris affirms that the king has been transfigured from Horus, *Lord of the Two Lands* to Osiris, *Lord of the West*.²⁷ Such is the nature of royal power in ancient Egypt: rather than elaborating on a story-line, the royal names of Horus and Osiris, I suggest carry the ethos of their divine characteristics. I propose that most if not all ancient Egyptian narratives incorporate in diverse genres the function of the office of kingship. Similarly, narratives that relate to the goddess motif constitute a key role in the office of kingship, one that is supportive rather than subordinate or subservient.

Equally relevant therefore to the issue of the term ‘myth’ is the form and function of the Egyptian office of kingship. The king not only embodies and maintains order in the institution of Egypt, the ethos of Horus and Osiris is manifest also in the office of kingship. The profound nature of the naming principle in ancient Egypt is further reflected in the royal titulary; five names are given to each king at his coronation, each of which infers knowledge of the characteristics of the titular gods. The naming process of kingship is one of the rituals of the king’s coronation; the first name of Horus signifies not only knowledge of the role of kingship, but also that the king embodies the dual nature of kingship.²⁸

He is not only a human king (*nswt*), he partakes also of the divine perpetuity of kings in the form of the *ka* (*k3w*) of kings. He is named ‘Majesty’ (*hm*), a term which is manifest in his divine nature.²⁹ If a ‘myth’ is a story about the gods, and the Egyptian king, in his role in the office of kingship is considered a god, then, are the stories that relate the exploits of kings considered ‘myths’, that is, in the context of the phenomenological model? Is the function of the Egyptian office of kingship, political, theological or religious? When Barbara Lesko commented that ‘inscriptions on royal monuments were intended primarily to bolster “the greatest myth of all,”

²⁷ His other epithets are, ‘*King of the Westerners*’ or ‘*King of the Netherworld*’.

²⁸ The office of kingship is the premise throughout this thesis. For the titulary of kingship, see Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 46-47; Alan Gardiner, ‘The Coronation of King Haremhab’, 15, *JEA*, 39, 1953:13-31.

²⁹ See James P. Allen, *Middle Egyptian: An Introduction to the Language and Culture of Hieroglyphs*, (Cambridge: University Press, 2005), 64-66, 31-33. Cf. 31: Allen translates the term ‘*hm*’ as ‘incarnation’ or ‘Majesty’. When this term is given to the king it infers that he is incarnated with the perpetual divine power of kingship, ‘*hm*’. For a similar view on the earthly and divine nature of kingship, see Silverman, ‘Divinity and Deities’, 66-67.

divine kingship', did she mean that the concept of divine kingship was a 'false' premise?³⁰

Returning to the issue of the term 'myth', generally defined as a story about a god or gods, a comparison may be made within the context of Mesopotamian kingship. In the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the narrative concerns Gilgamesh, the near-divine king of the city-state Uruk. His mother was the goddess Ninsun from whom Gilgamesh inherited two-thirds of his divine nature.³¹ The Epic is described by Stephanie Dalley as a 'literary composition' which narrates a heroic quest for fame and immortality. She explains why the narrative is named an 'epic' rather than 'myth': 'The work is classed as an epic because it features the heroic exploits of a dimly historical figure with, on the sidelines, gods and goddesses who sometimes take a part in the action...' ³² That Dalley chose to comment on the Gilgamesh narrative as an epic rather than 'myth' implies her deliberation on its narrative status. Yet she makes no reference to why the *Epic of Creation* is named an epic, even though she describes it as 'quite different to that of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*'; there is no human hero, only 'the hero-god Marduk'. In the *Epic of Creation*, the hero-god Marduk is attested with the title, 'King of the Gods', although he has no claim to historical status, nor is his name attested in any King List. Here are narratives that appear to fit the general theory of a 'myth', one is a creation story about the gods, the other concerns a demi-god and relates the concept of immortality. Yet both are given the narrative status of an 'epic'.³³ Neither is classified as a 'religion'.

These examples serve to illustrate the key issues of my thesis. A comparison reveals certain similarities between the Mesopotamian and ancient Egyptian concepts of kingship. However, clear cultural distinctions are demonstrated between the

³⁰ Barbara S. Lesko, *The Great Goddesses of Egypt*, (Norman, U.S.A: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 32. See also section, 'The Myth of Divine Kingship', 31-36.

³¹ See Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 40-41; A. George, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, (Allen Lane, Penguin Press, 1999), xxxi. In his Introduction, George also described the narrative as an epic. He refers to the mother of Gilgamesh as the goddess, Ninsan, and adds that Gilgamesh is 'none the less mortal'. This serves to illustrate the problem of defining the meaning of the term 'myth', whether, or to what extent, any divine element is measurable in a mythic narrative. Gilgamesh appears in the Sumerian King List as the fifth ruler of the First Dynasty of Uruk; he ruled 126 years.

³² Dalley, *Myths*, 39.

³³ In chapter two of this thesis, Gerardus van der Leeuw places the epic narrative within the paradigm of 'myth'.

concept of the divine in Mesopotamian and that in ancient Egyptian kingship. Although the divine element of Gilgamesh is measured as two-thirds of his nature, the *Epic of Gilgamesh* describes his failure to achieve immortality. The opposite is the norm in the Horus-Osiris alliance of Egyptian kingship described earlier. Historical evidence inscribed in texts and on temple and tomb walls not only validate a belief in immortality, their king lists verify the historical succession of Egyptian kings. Some names are omitted for political reasons; the rest testify to both the historical and divine status of kingship. Similarly, although the name of Gilgamesh is recorded in the Sumerian King List, he fails to achieve immortality. Consequently, the perception of Eternity in a supernatural world is absent in Mesopotamia, but present in ancient Egypt.

I return to the question posed earlier. What degree or *measure* of the divine presence in a narrative justifies its status as ‘myth’, given that the mother of Gilgamesh was a goddess, Marduk was a hero-god and creator-god, and Egyptian kingship was a divine office? Assuming the commonality of the typology ‘kingship’ as a category of religion, their differences signify the diverse viewpoints of each culture’s reality.

1.6 Research methods

In any research of value those who seek to incorporate the primary and secondary literature of any given discipline as the key method of research as I do, must provide some account of the history and background of the key authors. Only when the literature under scrutiny is placed within the context of its *time* are the intentions of the authors understood. It is within this framework that the writings of the early twentieth century classical phenomenologists of religion who first classified religious phenomena into typologies are re-examined. Whether, or to what extent, later phenomenologists were influenced by or superseded the earlier classification of universal typologies, their writing also forms part of this research. I must emphasise that the research area concerns only the configuration of typologies of religion and in particular, the term ‘myth’ as a category of religion, in ancient Egypt. The consequential ripples which result from the literature research, the *mythos*-myth question; the polemic of ‘myth’; the ‘essence’ of religion, the ‘naming’ principle and others, contribute substantially to my research.

Equally, it is important that the same criterion is given to the literary traditions of ancient Egypt, more so, given that their historical period of three thousand years is situated in ancient times. Further, because their voice is silent, I make some endeavour to interpret the meaning and intent of their texts, iconography, and archaeology, ‘as if’ from the insider Egyptian perspective. Because the ancient Egyptians appear to incorporate their text or narratives within a socio-political system in which kingship symbolised societal order, a broad continuum of literature in a diverse range of disciplines is examined. Thus, the theories and critiques of contemporary scholars in the field are an important contribution to my research, whether scholars of phenomenology, religion or Egyptology. Given that critiques may offer salient points which not only illustrate contentious issues but also offer theories of resolution, their literature forms a key part in my research. Finally, re-examination of the traditional presentations of ‘myth’ as a phenomenological category may resolve some of the issues of contemporary critiques when these critiques are applied to ancient Egyptian texts.³⁴

Although I demonstrated earlier what appeared as issues of the phenomenological method, I propose that rather than the process itself, the key issue may lie within the human propensity to identify with similar beliefs and cultural concepts. Difficulties may arise when, with good intentions, the phenomenologist struggles to engage fully with the principles of empathy and *epoché* when they are applied to beliefs unfamiliar and unlike our own. The phenomenologist may be unable to comprehend these concepts which appear strange and foreign; I mentioned earlier that Smith was *aware* that he was unable to *fully* comprehend why the ancient Egyptian believed that ‘the sky was a cow’. An observation of some worth is that the classical phenomenologists were also aware of the difficulties inherent in the phenomenological method. It is important to reiterate my earlier comment that the phenomenological directive to the researcher was not only *to strive* to practice empathy and *epoché* but also on completion, to re-appraise the research. I have endeavoured to follow this principle in my research, to scrutinise the literature with rigour.³⁵

³⁴ I have referred also the academic journals of the relevant disciplines in my literature research, if only to access the immediacy and inter-academic scholarly dialogue to new theories.

³⁵ Recent studies in Egyptian literature demonstrate a similar approach to understanding texts from an Egyptian perspective. For example, the contribution by a group of scholars from different disciplines

To summarise the issue, my thesis concerns the terms ‘myth’ and ‘religion’, modern constructs that convey to a myriad of scholars and students a complex range of diverse interpretations. Contemporary writers in the field who offer theories of the terms ‘religion’ and ‘myth’ for scholarly discussion, do so with the implied understanding that both terms are defined generally as universal constructs based on a religious ‘essence’ as the commonality of similarities. On the one hand, no matter how similar the categories appear, only rarely, are categories from different traditions exactly congruent.³⁶ I propose therefore that differences matter.

Barry Kemp, archaeologist and Field Director of the Egyptian Exploration Society’s excavations at el-Amarna, suggested that the ancient Egyptians ‘were like us, but only so far. The difference is more profound than their mass of gods and fragments of unfamiliar mythology’. He continued that certain texts reveal ‘a relationship between the human individual and the divine which is quite unlike that found in some of the major religions of the modern world (especially Christianity and Islam)’.³⁷ If the aim of the phenomenologist of religion is towards understanding another culture then general similarities of religious data may provide a general understanding only. In the phenomenological model the similarities may blur the reality of an individual culture. I propose that the key element which identifies the myriad of world cultures, whether Egyptian, Buddhist, Christian or an ‘Other’, is the signifier term ‘difference’. Consequently, differences offer not only a more profound understanding of what the term ‘myth’, sacred story or narrative means to the adherent, but also allows the phenomenologist of religion to comprehend the texts ‘as if’ through the eyes of the insider. My intention therefore is not only to retain the phenomenological method of classifying similarities into groups but to extend the analysis to incorporate socio-cultural differences. Egyptian texts are the signifier which identity the socio-political institution of ancient Egypt.

There is some advantage in the phenomenological method of classifying similarities into groups given that differences may be found only after a consensus of

in the field of Egyptology, see Antonio Loprieno, ed., *Ancient Egyptian Literature: History and Forms*, (Leiden; New York; Köln: E.J.Brill, 1996).

³⁶ Satlow, ‘Disappearing Categories’, 287-298.

³⁷ Kemp, *BD*, 2-3.

similarities is established.³⁸ With this in mind, the aim of my thesis is to re-evaluate the universal classification of the taxon 'myth' as a typology of religion in ancient Egypt. I offer various comparisons to the taxon 'myth' but I emphasise the socio-cultural differences demonstrated in the texts of ancient Egypt. Consequently, rather than a religion-centred interpretation of 'myth', I posit that the so-called 'myths', or more simply, 'texts' or 'narratives' of ancient Egypt demonstrate the socio-cultural identity of the ancient Egyptians. Further, that the different types of Egyptian texts which permeate my thesis demonstrate that the office of kingship is not only the pivotal focus but also the mirror through which the ancient Egyptian voice is heard.

1.7 Chapters Overview

Chapter two is my pivotal chapter; I re-visit the subject of phenomenology to establish the veracity of the issue proposed in my thesis. My aim is to identify the roots that result in the issue, the problem of 'myth' as a category of religion in ancient Egypt. I posit that 'myth', alternatively, the texts and narratives of ancient Egypt, are more appropriately classified within the rubric of a socio-political genre, which is human-centred rather than interpreted as 'religion-centred'. Subsequent chapters examine the various issues which have been identified in chapter two.

Because my thesis concerns phenomenology of religion it is necessary first to examine the interrelationship between the history of religions, which concerns the study of religion, and the key factors which result in the discipline of the phenomenology of religion, that is, the study of religious data. Since the latter determines the method of classifying religious data into typologies of religion, in particular, 'myth' as a category of religion, scrutiny of the literature of the classical phenomenologists, William Brede Kristensen, Gerardus van der Leeuw and Mircea Eliade, who first established the method, is the focus of this chapter. Critiques from contemporary scholars in the field are equally important, if only, to justify the presence of certain issues within the discipline of phenomenology of religion. For example, a key issue is the overlay of Christianity as the 'essence' of religion, the common element which classifies religious data in typologies of religion. Universal

³⁸ See William E. Paden, 'Universals Revisited: Human Behaviours and Culture Variations', 276, *Numen*, 48, 2001:276-289.

typologies in general and ‘myth’ as a universal category of religion are among other issues discussed.

As a result of my literature research, I respond to the key questions in the summary of chapter two. How has ‘myth’ been defined as a classification or typology? What is the meaning intended by the three classical phenomenologists of the ‘essence’ of religion? What are the consequences to the meaning of the term ‘myth’ when classified as a typology of ‘religion’? Is there evidence of socio-cultural differences observed in ‘myths’?

In chapter three, a similar issue to the Christian overlay is identified in the Greek overlay of the characters of the Egyptian deities, Isis and Osiris. I examine the literature of the Greek historian, Plutarch, on the so-called ‘myth’ of Isis and Osiris and the critique of the Plutarch version by J. Gwyn Griffiths. I argue not only that the Greek overlay has distorted the Egyptian image of Isis and Osiris but also that the fundamental character of the Egyptian god, Osiris as the ‘*Lord of the Westerners*’, is ‘re-created’ in Greek fashion, as an earthly king. The Egyptian perspective of the role of Isis and Osiris is provided by the Pyramid Texts, the earliest source writings of the ancient Egyptians. The thrust of this chapter is to emphasise not only the absence in Egyptian texts of the depiction of Isis and Osiris as an earthly king and queen of Egypt, but also the frequent inference in today’s literature, that Plutarch’s account is the extant *Egyptian* version of the ‘myth’ of Isis and Osiris. Chapter three first introduces the key function of the royal Horus-Osiris axis and the role of kingship in ancient Egypt. Of considerable importance to my thesis is my endeavour to utilise the phenomenological method of comparing data ‘as if’ from the insider view, although I discard the common element of comparison, the ‘religious’ element with its association with Christian theology.

In chapter four I re-appraise the term ‘myth’ in its relationship with ‘religion’ and I challenge the perception that all ‘myths’ contain the universal religious ‘essence’, identified in chapter two. I demonstrate the confusion which results from the myriad of definitions by contemporary writers in the field of religion, and in particular, I research why ‘myth’ has been labelled with the polemic term ‘false’. The dichotomy of ‘myth’, in its relationship with ‘religion’, creates its own problems. When the story of the ‘Other’ religion is defined as ‘myth’, that it is false, then my story is not ‘myth, because it is ‘true’. I seek some resolution in retracing the Greek origin and interpretation of the term *mythos* in its association with *logos*, and the

apparent, changing authorial intent of both terms. One of the key questions seeking resolution in this chapter is whether, or to what extent, the Greeks were the source of today's polemic that myth is 'false'. While chapter two identified key issues, chapters three and four illustrate what appears as the consequence of the absence of the principle methods of phenomenology, *epoché* and empathy.

I introduce in chapter five a reconstruction of the positive aspects of a myth-phenomenology partnership and draw together the subjects highlighted in the previous chapters. I demonstrate a subjective-objective approach to the study of texts and iconography and I urge also that the core principles of phenomenology should not be discarded under the weight of critiques from scholars in the field. To this end, I present a selection of texts which demonstrate the myth-religion issues critiqued by contemporary scholars. From a positive position I offer not only a re-appraisal of the method of van der Leeuw but also aspects of phenomenology from different disciplines. Equally, while I discuss the importance of the *etic-emic* inter-relationship for analysing key texts, the 'naming' principle in ancient Egypt is a central tenet towards understanding Egyptian texts 'as if' from the inside. I enquire whether van der Leeuw's method of 'naming' is similar to that of the ancient Egyptians. My aim in this chapter is to demonstrate that phenomenology, as a method, is a crucial tool for the study of 'religions' or cultures. The final section introduces texts which confirm that scholars, who 'do' phenomenology in different disciplines, appear, to some extent, successful in their endeavours. The chapter concludes with a phenomenological approach to Egyptian texts as a pre-cursor to my Case Study in chapter six.

Chapter six is the accumulation of my research in the previous chapters. The Case Study demonstrates not only a new hermeneutic of the taxon 'myth' within the framework of the phenomenological method but also indicates that in ancient Egypt names and context matter. My method, the subjective-objective comparison of Egyptian texts, detailed in chapter six, excludes the intangible 'essence' of religion as the common element of comparison. Following the principles of phenomenology, the texts, as the voice of the ancient Egyptians, are reinstated and act as, the validating referent of the adherent. I demonstrate that Egyptian words and names are understood as signifiers in the context and textual meaning intended by the ancient Egyptians. As an example of the Egyptian perspective, I introduce hieroglyphs of the

key deities not only to indicate that they convey to some extent the meaning and character of the deities depicted, but also suggest a phonetic rendering.

Thus, 'seeing' from the insider view, which in my Case Study is the Egyptian view, predicates the fundamental principle of phenomenology, that is, to understand the Egyptians, within the limits of *their* parameters. Only then may a conjoined subjective-objective view be realised. This is not to say that I achieve full understanding of the Egyptian texts, rather I am aware that as a human being, comprehension as the adherents intended, is elusive. Given that I demonstrate the fact that the classical phenomenologists agree that absolute certainty cannot be achieved in the understanding of another religion or culture, in this issue, to some degree, the voice of the critiques may be silenced. Notwithstanding these comments, it is important that I indicate what I mean by the insider view, and what appears as, hints of different insider voices within the Egyptian texts under scrutiny.

Within the inter-contextual genres discussed in this thesis, the Egyptian insider view is *culturally identified* with the rituals, beliefs, and socio-political traditions exemplified in the texts, iconography and archaeology. For example, in chapter three, and within the context of the Pyramid Texts, the authoritative, insider voices of the fifth and sixth dynasty kings are accompanied by texts which declare divine support of the Horus-king's transfiguration or transcendence as Osiris. Equally, in my Case Study, insiders are identified as the Egyptian elite, the hierarchical administrators of the Egyptian state who act on behalf of the king. Thus, different insider voices are representative of the diverse genres of the insider Egyptian perspective as a whole. Although Egyptian deities, the earthly Horus-king, Osiris, *Lord of the West*, the elite administrators, and others, hint to different insider voices, I posit that the definitive insider which signifies the essential Egyptian point of view, is the theocratic office of Egyptian kingship.

My premise is first, to examine the texts 'as if' from the perspective of the ancient Egyptians and second, to achieve comprehension as far as my endeavours allow. The protagonist is the complex concept of kingship although the term 'kingship' or 'king' is absent in ancient Egyptian texts and iconography. Other than the five titular names of kingship, the key epithet for all Egyptian kings is the '*Lord of the Two Lands*'. Only when viewed through the lens of the Egyptian texts, iconography and archaeology does the term convey its full implication. For example, the Power of the king, a key motif throughout my thesis, maintains the unity of the

Two Lands, a concept which signifies among others, stability, order, and a royal adherence to the principles of the goddess Maat. Thus the ‘naming’ principle, first re-appraised in the previous chapter, continues in the Case Study. Phenomenology is revisited in a comparative analysis between the modern interpretation of different types of texts, and the contextual meaning conveyed by the Egyptian texts. ‘Funerary’ texts and ‘transfiguration’ texts are an example; the former suggests ‘finality’, the latter an ‘ongoing’ existence.

In the end, my Case Study is the vehicle for my new hermeneutic for the term ‘myth’. Given that the names ‘text’, ‘textual narrative’ or ‘narrative’ convey a meaning devoid of the polemic ‘false’, it is an important first step. My aim throughout my thesis is to acknowledge the practical function of a subject-objective, phenomenological method in its application to the phenomenology of Egyptian texts. In my final example, the Case Study presents an analysis of an Egyptian ‘incantation’ text with textual re-appraisal, iconographic images and evidence from archaeological sources. The latter serves as a model for van der Leeuw’s premise, that all empirical data should undergo a rigorous re-appraisal and correction process.

Finally, because research within my thesis topic appears sparse, further research is necessary in the application of this new understanding of phenomenology as a tool towards understanding other ancient cultures.

Chapter Two

Development of the Theory of Myth in the History and Phenomenology of Religion

Indubitable certitude or clarity cannot be obtained and, indeed, can never be reached when we are seeking understanding, but we can come to the greatest attainable probability.¹

2.1 Introduction

The key focus in this chapter is to establish the development of the theory of 'myth' as a phenomenological category of 'religion'. My purpose is to exemplify the basis for the issue proposed in my thesis, namely, that the category 'myth' rather than being interpreted as religion-centred, may be more appropriately classified within a socio-political genre which is human-centred.² I propose that a historical socio-political method allows for a human-divine liaison rather than the exclusive religion-centred ahistorical approach of the classical phenomenologists.³ I differentiate between the meaning of human-centred and the religious nature implied by the term *homo religiosus*, given that the 'essence' of religion is one of the key issues under scrutiny. The so-called 'myths' of ancient Egyptian 'religion' which I posit are centred around the socio-political office of kingship, provide not only a linking thread throughout my thesis but also the framework for a new hermeneutic of 'myth'. Accordingly, Merlin Donald, a professor of Psychology, is one of many scholars who acknowledge that the 'mythic mantle' is located within the wider, socio-political spectrum of divine kingship.

Thus the storied king, with his divine right and his power protected by an armamentarium of validating myths, nevertheless had to rely on

¹ W. Brede Kristensen, *The Meaning of Religion*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), 6.

² See chapter one, Introduction, on the problems of the terms 'myth' and 'religion'. On various concepts of religion, see Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, (University of Chicago Press, 2005) and his chapter: 'The Birth Trauma of World Religions', 107-120. Chapter four of this thesis provides an analysis of the issues between the terms, 'myth' and 'religion'.

³ See G.A. James, *Interpreting Religion*, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 6. James commented: 'This is not to say that all phenomenological approaches to religion are a-historical, a-theological, and anti-reductive to the same extent, in precisely the same way, or with the same response to the philosophical and methodological problems involved therein'. Some problems which may connect to the ahistorical approach are discussed in the next chapter.

coronations, elaborate weddings, customs, ... and all the formalities of a courtly hierarchy to consolidate and implement his power in daily life ... There is no doubt where the power lies in traditional societies.⁴

Consequently, my overall aims in this chapter are threefold: first, to examine the interrelationship between the history of religions and the key factors that result in the discipline of 'the phenomenology of religion'. To this end, an appraisal is necessary not only of the literature of the classical phenomenologists but also critiques from contemporary writers in the field to establish the veracity of the issues I propose. My second aim is to determine the *method* of classifying typologies of religion and 'myth' as a category of religion given that it is the phenomenological, systematic study of religious data that first classifies phenomena into categories or typologies.⁵ Finally, I refer in this chapter and subsequent chapters to critiques by contemporary writers in the field who challenge not only the taxonomy myth as a religion-centred category but also the problem of universal typologies in general. Consequently, a re-evaluation of the traditional classification of 'myth' as a phenomenological category of religion may illustrate some of the issues posited by contemporary critiques. While it is essential to scrutinize the phenomenological methodology that establishes the categories in the first place, the ultimate objective in this chapter is to identify the key issues of my thesis.

2.2 Phenomenology of Religion: Lack of Consensus

In his publication concerning the methodology of the classical phenomenologist George Alfred James notes that scholars within other fields agree to a positive contribution of phenomenology but 'such is not the case in the academic study of religion'.⁶ However, this is not to say that other disciplines are entirely free of issues. Nursing, for example, is one field in which phenomenology has experienced a positive influence although certain issues remain unresolved. For

⁴ Merlin Donald, *A Mind so Rare*, (New York; London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), 297. For Egyptian kingship, see Barry Kemp, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilisation*, (London; New York: Routledge). For continuity of divine kingship in Egypt, 20-27; for the Power inherent in the office of Egyptian kingship, 183-184.

⁵ See James, *Interpreting Religion*, 50. On phenomenology: 'The principal procedure, then, is not "historical" but systematic'. Also the role of the phenomenologist is to select, systemise and interpret. See Eric J. Sharpe, *Comparative Religion: A History*, (London: Duckworth, 1975), 245. Sharpe's view on phenomenology appears to confirm Eliade's, often controversial status, as both a historian of religion as well as a phenomenologist.

⁶ James, *Interpreting Religion*, 1.

example truth claims.⁷ There are different types of phenomenology as there are different approaches to the phenomenology of religion.⁸ Nonetheless, because of the ambiguity of the application of the phenomenological methods in the academic study of religions, there appears to be little agreement. James explains:

But a look at the use made of so-called phenomenology within the field of religion suggests that the phenomenology of religion, or the phenomenological approach to religion, entails a level of confusion that exceeds that of other fields, a confusion of another order.⁹

A similar level of confusion is present in the initial stages of the 'history of religions' which continues after the phenomenological method is applied. This may have a bearing on the lack of a clear definition of the term 'myth' as a 'category of religion'.¹⁰ Equally, there is contention among scholars of the meaning of the term 'the phenomenology of religion'.¹¹ Nonetheless, James suggests there are 'certain

⁷ See Tania Yegdich, 'On the Phenomenology of Empathy in Nursing: Empathy or Sympathy' in *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 30, 1999:83-93. Research shows that in nurse-patient relationships nurses, in general, find it difficult to empathise with the experiences of certain patients. Similarly, the classical phenomenologists of religion struggled to identify their sacred stories with 'another' culture's 'myth'. See also Anders Bergmark and Lars Oscarsson, 'The Limits of Phenomenology and Objectivity: On the Encounter between Scientism and Practice', *British Journal of Social Work*, 1992:121-132. In this paper, phenomenological research on alcoholism centred on the tension between the scientific objective data which contradicted the *subjective* experience of the practitioners/clients. The reports failed to convey 'accurately' their historical actions or original intentions; the *objective* observations of the researcher tested differently. This does not mean, say the researchers, that the individuals falsify their experiences, rather they held different 'truth-claims'.

⁸ For an overall account of different approaches to phenomenology, see the recent work by Cox, *Phenomenology of Religion*. See also C. J. Bleeker, 'The Phenomenological Method' in *Numen*, 6, 1959:96-111. He also refers to the confusion and polemics of the phenomenology of religion, 106.

⁹ James, *Interpreting Religion*, 1. James refers to the insight gained from a phenomenological analysis when applied to psychology, sociology, history, law, political science, art, etc., particularly that of Husserl and his followers. James argued that within the field of religion, the phenomenology employed is not as Husserl, or his followers, intended. See also Bleeker, 'Phenomenological Method', 98, 103. He also supports a non-Husserlian concept of *epoché* and eidetic vision in that the method is scientific rather than, as Husserl intended, a 'theory of knowledge'.

¹⁰ Cf. preface to Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, ix. He begins: 'It would be nice to begin with a clear and concise definition of "myth" but unfortunately that can't be done'. See also comment by Marshall (1988:449) on the use of the term 'myth' in the Bible, quoted by Wyatt, *Myths of Power*, (Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 1996), 11. 'Myth is a confusing term in theology; it is used in so many ill-defined ways that it would be no bad thing if its use were prohibited'.

¹¹ On the phenomenology of religion, see Sharpe, *Comparative*, 221. 'The label is, however, far from explanatory, and simply to use this form of words without further definition would be unwise, since even the scholars who use this term, and claim to apply this method to do their work are not always sure as to its precise definition'. See also James, *Interpreting Religion*, 11-21. Chapter A: 'The Problem' highlights the phenomenological differences of Bleeker, Pettazzoni, Widengren, Bettis, *et al.*

family traits' that can be 'observed, examined, and discussed'.¹² Moreover, while he notes the similarities between the phenomenologists in his study, he concedes that differences may be taken into account. If the criterion is towards understanding the phenomena whether concepts, artefacts or family groups then similarities as well as differences contribute towards a more profound comprehension.¹³ Nonetheless, James proposed that the 'family traits' analogy is applied to the phenomenology of religion that the similarity may be 'slight' or pronounced'.

The notion of family traits is a fitting analogy because family traits, like the characteristics of the phenomenology of religion, can be slight or pronounced, and they are accommodated differently within the whole personality of each family member.¹⁴ (my emphasis)

James implies that when this concept is used to classify typologies of religion, the parameters of commonality are broadened rather than constrained within a rigid, either-or concept of religiousness. This is not to assume an absence of the 'essence' of religion rather, if a phenomenon has a degree or measure of such an 'essence', then it may claim status as a typology of religion. Given that the abstract term 'the essence of religion' defines the shared characteristics of the pattern or grouping of data, the term carries also what appears as a hidden theological agenda. The definition of the term 'essence' of religion may prove to be an issue of some significance in the later re-appraisal of the phenomenological classification of categories.

For this reason, this chapter seeks to re-examine the similarities and differences of the phenomenological methodologies of three pioneers in the phenomenology of religion; William Brede Kristensen, Gerardus van der Leeuw, and Mircea Eliade.¹⁵ Given that each phenomenologist uses different approaches to the

¹² James, *Interpreting Religion*, 48.

¹³ James, *Interpreting Religion*, 7. See also Wyatt, 'Mythic Mind', 14: 'The principle of 'patterning', of seeing in the evidence what we expect to see, or want to see...'

¹⁴ James, *Interpreting Religion*, 6-7. Although James admits the so-called family members of his case study, he adds that Chantepie, Kristensen and van der Leeuw do not use these terms; he identifies these family traits as 'a-historical, a-theological, anti-reductive'. See also Gavin D. Flood, *Beyond Phenomenology, Rethinking the Study of Religion*, (London; New York: Cassell, 1999), 48. He suggests a similar familial concept on category formation: 'The degrees of membership of a category can be linked through family resemblances'.

¹⁵ See Flood, *Phenomenology*, 16. Flood includes Ninian Smart. See also James, *Interpreting Religion*, 4. James considers Kristensen and van der Leeuw as 'key examples of the phenomenology of religion'.

grouping of similar religious data into categories, ideal types or hierophanies, their common objective is to understand the religious data. Reference is also made to the literature of later phenomenologists whose methods have influenced the discipline of phenomenology of religion. C. J. Bleeker in particular has a combined interest of some substance in phenomenology and Egyptology. Some mention was made earlier to Wilfred Cantwell Smith and reference is made later to views on the religion-tradition discussion. Varying responses will be forthcoming, some critical, others supportive of the comparative systems proposed by the earlier classical phenomenologists. In this chapter and later chapters, I refer also to critiques or comments from contemporary scholars in the field: George Alfred James, Robert Baird, Eric Sharpe, Gavin Flood, Guilford Dudley III, Jonathan Z. Smith, Hans Penner, James Cox, and others. Literature therefore forms one of the main sources of my methodology.

The key questions addressed in this chapter: How has 'myth' been defined as a classification or typology? What is the meaning intended by the three classical phenomenologists of the 'essence' of religion? What are the consequences to the meaning of the term 'myth' when classified as a typology of 'religion'? Is there evidence of socio-cultural differences observed in 'myths'? Responses to these questions will form part of the conclusion of this chapter. Subsequent chapters serve to demonstrate the phenomenological issues exemplified in this chapter.

2.3 Diverse Methodologies: the Critiques

Within the academic study of religions, many scholars have voiced concern about the lack of consensus regarding the parameters delimiting the field. Kitagawa commented that, 'the "history of religions" means different things to different people'.¹⁶ Baird observes the diverse disciplines of anthropologists, sociologists, depth psychologists, and social anthropologists. If they were also to be called historians of religions, 'the majority of scholars surveyed would not be considered historians of religion in any strict sense'. As a result, 'the latter badge [an historian of

¹⁶ Mircea Eliade and Joseph M. Kitagawa, eds., *The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), 14. See also James, *Interpreting Religion*, 47, whether 'phenomenological approaches to religion have anything more in common than a name'.

religion] becomes even more ambiguous than it already is'.¹⁷ Eric Sharpe makes a similar point.

[T]he sheer weight of material which has accumulated under the general heading of "comparative religion" is now sub-divided into the history of religion, the psychology of religion, the sociology of religion, the phenomenology of religion (not to mention a host of auxiliary disciplines), the pursuit of any of which might occupy a normal scholar for a normal lifetime. Each of these now has its own approaches and its own appropriate methods.¹⁸

Sharpe's comments highlight not only the eclectic nature but also the weight of material available in 1975. It emphasises also the problems envisaged for the student of religion nearly thirty years later with an increased output of scholarly writing on the history and phenomenology of religion. Eliade suggests there are 'methodological difficulties inherent in all research in the history of religions',¹⁹ while a similar issue is echoed by Dudley when he offers that historians of religions sought first to identify themselves with what was known as *Religionswissenschaft* and then later as 'history of religions'. This has resulted in an insecure anchor, because as Dudley concluded, 'historians of religion have lacked a commonly accepted methodology'.²⁰ Given that Eliade's methodology appears to depend on the history of religions, Dudley doubts whether Eliade, whose phenomenology is discussed later in the next section, has shown a way 'through the conflicting methodologies'. Consequently, there appears to be confusion about what constitutes the term 'history of religion'.

The conflicting methodologies that subsequently arise in the phenomenology of religion may be symptomatic of the different approaches by classical phenomenologists in the formation of 'categories of religion' in general and 'myth' as a 'category of religion' in particular. Baird suggests that while an analysis of category formation is not a cure for all our problems, it could point us in the right direction.²¹ Similarly, the degree or measure of *similarity* that determines the

¹⁷ Robert D. Baird, *Category Formation and the History of Religions*, (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1991), 1.

¹⁸ Sharpe, preface to *Comparative*, xiii.

¹⁹ Eliade, *History of Religions*, 92.

²⁰ Guilford Dudley, *Religion on Trial: Mircea Eliade and his Critics*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1977), 3.

²¹ Baird, *Category Formation*, 2.

religiousness of given categories is a further consideration. Flood, while less concerned with category formation, rightly finds it difficult to accept the category 'religion' in universal terms. His comments serve to illustrate the issue of the term 'religion'.

The abstract category 'religion' which developed within the particular history of Western thought has been taken since the Enlightenment to be universal. This, however, is problematic when 'religion', if defined in essentialist terms is applied to non-Western contexts.²²

Consequently, re-examination of category formation is essential if only to illustrate the issues from an Egyptian perspective. The next section, therefore, provides a critical appraisal of the different approaches of three classical phenomenologists. Equally important is the value each phenomenologist places on the classification of the taxon 'myth' as a typology of religion.

2.4 Classical Phenomenologists: the Selection

Only the methodologies of the classical phenomenologists as they relate to the formation of 'categories of religion' in general and 'myth' in particular are considered. My selection is influenced not only by their diverse approaches to the formation of religious categories but also their similar subjective, predisposition towards Christianity as the 'essence of religion'. Kristensen and van der Leeuw appear more predisposed to their Christian beliefs than Eliade, although he hints at the superiority of Christianity. I should stress that the phenomenological methodologies of the early pioneers are equally important to my research.

It seems inevitable that a relationship existed between Eliade, van der Leeuw and Kristensen; just as Kristensen was of some influence to van der Leeuw, he in turn was inspirational to Eliade.²³ Eliade is selected because he appears to hold 'a

²² Flood, *Phenomenology*, 63. For an overview of various interpretations of the term 'religion', see Jonathon Z. Smith, 'Religion, Religions, Religious', in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, 269-284; For a well-argued difference between 'national' and 'universal' religions, and universal religion and world religions, see Masuzawa, *World Religions*, 107-120. For the term 'tradition' to supersede the concept of 'religion', see Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, (London: SPCK, 1978).

²³ See James, *Interpreting Religion*, 4. 'The influence of Kristensen can be seen in the phenomenology of van der Leeuw'. Also Ivan Strenski, *Four Theories of Myth in Twentieth Century History*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987), 116-117 and his comment: 'Eliade's specific debt to van der Leeuw is hard to estimate'.

position of unparalleled eminence in the field'²⁴ particularly when he broadens the system to incorporate an East-West understanding of 'religion'. Consequently, compared to either Kristensen or van der Leeuw, Eliade indicates a more profound awareness of the phenomenological issues.

James described Kristensen as 'one of the most influential early exponents of a phenomenology of religion';²⁵ his name is synonymous with the phenomenological method. Further his grouping together of similar religious data appears to be the catalyst towards studying the formation and subsequent acceptance of the term 'categories of religion' in Religious Studies departments. Both van der Leeuw and Kristensen are considered 'foundational' phenomenologists,²⁶ because they represent 'the unity and diversity of the conceptual understanding of the term phenomenology of religion'.²⁷ Van der Leeuw's innovative method places him in the position of 'a pioneering phenomenologist of religion'.²⁸ There is little doubt that van der Leeuw comes under the influence of his teacher, Kristensen, although not exclusively so.²⁹ On the one hand, Kristensen appears as the catalyst for van der Leeuw's initial approach to phenomenology, although he disagrees with some aspects of van der Leeuw's adoption of various psychological techniques.

It is important to mention that C.P. Tiele, Friedrich Max Muller, and P.D. Chantepie de la Saussaye are the first phenomenologists of religion who introduce a descriptive system of classification.³⁰ While these early fathers of phenomenology

²⁴ Guildford Dudley, 'Mircea Eliade as the "Anti-Historian" of Religions', 346, *JAAR*, 44, 1976:345-359.

²⁵ James, preface to *Interpreting Religion*, xii. See Sharpe, *Comparative*, 229, and his comment that Kristensen is 'rightly considered to be the doyen of the phenomenologists'.

²⁶ James, *Interpreting Religion*, 3. The term 'foundational' is used by James to refer to phenomenologists of religion who can be regarded as foundational and therefore representative of phenomenology of religion as a type of study.

²⁷ James, *Interpreting Religion*, 5.

²⁸ Jacques Waardenburg, *Classical Approaches to the Study of Religion*, (New York: W. de Gruyter, 1999), 398.

²⁹ C. J. Bleeker was also a student of Kristensen. Because of his important contribution, not only to his different approach to phenomenology but also to his works on Egyptian rituals, festival and deities, I refer to his contribution, where appropriate, within this thesis.

³⁰ See James, *Interpreting Religion*, 4. He commented that Chantepie 'can be seen more clearly in the works of both Kristensen and van der Leeuw'. This, he argues, justifies his inclusion in his comparative phenomenological study alongside Kristensen and van der Leeuw. See also Strenski, *Four Theories*, 111. He argues that Muller was the father figure and identifies C.P. Tiele and P. D. Chantepie de la Saussaye as the first phenomenologist of religion.

may be the catalyst, Cox describes Kristensen as occupying 'a strategic position between Tiele's and Chantepie's theologically slanted views of comparative religions'.³¹ Kristensen offers an empirical and analytical study of religious data; he ascribes the autonomy of the data not only to the phenomenon itself, but also to the verification of the adherents. Here is a concept of some weight, one which I pursue quite vigorously throughout my thesis. Finally my choice of the three phenomenologists is influenced by their interest in ancient Egypt: van der Leeuw studied ancient Egyptian religion under eminent Egyptologists, Adolf Erman and Kurt Sethe; Kristensen studied various classical languages including ancient Egyptian in the Faculty of Theology at the University of Oslo; he received his PhD in Oslo in 1896 with a dissertation on Egyptian representations of life and death. Eliade has a similar interest in ancient Egypt as his writings on the subject attest.³²

2.5 William Brede Kristensen (1867-1953)

Born in Kristiansand, Norway, Kristensen is known principally as a scholar in the religions and languages of the Ancient Near East, with specific interest in the historical religions of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Greece among others. He became a Dutch citizen in 1917, and held the Chair of the History and Phenomenology of Religion in Leiden University for 36 years.

2.5.1 Kristensen: 'Categories of Religion'

The discipline of the History of Religion originally compared religions in order to determine their religious value; the aim was to examine the primary documents of ancient religions for an overall view. In this comparative process the degree of each religion's value and development was classified as higher or lower; the purpose of this type of classification was to demonstrate 'the superiority of Christianity'.³³ Kristensen dismisses this type of comparison which was neither systematic nor

³¹ Cox, *Phenomenology of Religion*, 108.

³² Background information on the three classical scholars, W. Brede Kristensen, Gerardus van der Leeuw and Mircea Eliade is sourced from Cox, *Phenomenology of Religion*; Jacques Waardenburg, 'Religion between Reality and Idea', *Numen*, 19, 1972, 128-203; Waardenburg, *Classical Approaches*; Hendrik Kraemer's Introduction to Kristensen's *Meaning of Religion*; Mircea Eliade, *Encyclopaedia of Religion*, (New York, N.Y.; Macmillan, 1987).

³³ Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 3. See also Sharpe, *Comparative*, 229, n.17 in which he quotes Kraemer's comment that 'while comparative religion had graded religions on an ascending evolutionary scale, this technique had now been shown to be wrong'.

comparative. Rather than comparing religions, Kristensen groups the myriad of divergent religious data into similarities for comparison. His innovative approach to phenomenology resulted in the merging of the systematic History of Religion with applied Philosophy of Religion.³⁴

Because of the 'limited validity' of historical research, Kristensen suggests that the scholar *extracts* from their historical setting 'the similar facts and phenomena, brings them together and studies them in groups'.³⁵ Thus in order to come to an understanding about texts, the scholar removes texts from their historical time sequence. According to Kristensen, the historian looks at history objectively and only approximate knowledge of the religious phenomena is achieved. On the other hand, the believer experiences his *faith* subjectively; he has an intimate knowledge of it. Kristensen suggests that the historian should not only adopt an ahistorical but also a subjective approach to religious phenomena. He believes that to understand religious data a certain amount of intuition or empathy is indispensable. Only then may a subjective-objective interrelationship emerge between the 'feeling' of the believer and 'factual knowledge' of the historian.³⁶

Kristensen explains that only after the scholar extracts the religious data from their historical setting are the similar phenomena grouped then studied together. The grouping procedure is not by the greater or lesser religious value of religions, rather the religious *data* is grouped into categories. The grouping method separates data into groups that are 'nearly identical' and share a common religious meaning. The advantage of placing similarities into groups, Kristensen suggests, allows for a better understanding of the universal religious category as a whole. 'They shed light upon one another and lead to a deeper insight into the essence [of religion] of the whole

³⁴ Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 9. See also Sharpe, *Comparative*, 222-223. 'The actual term "phenomenology of religion" was coined by the Dutch scholar P. D. de la Saussaye and was meant to be no more than a systematic counterpart of the history of religion. He brings together "groups of religious phenomena" – the object of worship, idolatry, sacred stones, trees and animals, nature-worship, the worship of men, the gods, magic and divination, sacrifice and prayer, holy places, times and persons, the community, scriptures, doctrines, mythology, dogmas and philosophies, ethics and art'. Sharpe concluded with an important point, that it was meant to be no more than a *cross-cultural comparison* of the element of religious belief and practice rather than the comparison in *cultural isolation* and chronological sequence. Sharpe suggests that this type of phenomenology is better described as 'descriptive phenomenology'.

³⁵ Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 12.

³⁶ Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 10.

group of similar phenomena'.³⁷ Comparison therefore is between the different *forms* of religious phenomena rather than religions as a whole; Kristensen separates the religious phenomena from the different religions then classifies them into abstract ahistorical categories of different 'types'. Given that the categories are generalisations suggests a lack of definition and identity.

According to Kristensen, in the study of religion the historian is unable to 'fully understand' the religious data. Similarly, when using the philosophical concept empathy, approximate knowledge only may be achieved. Likewise, the existential nature of the believer's faith is elusive; it cannot be defined. Equally, Kristensen believes that a 'rational' systematic study of religion is impossible. In the end, he concludes with more uncertainty: 'Indubitable certitude or clarity cannot be obtained and, indeed, can never be reached when we are seeking understanding, but we can come to the greatest attainable probability'.³⁸ Consequently, only the believer or the community of believers have the credentials to validate the religious phenomena described by the phenomenologist-historian. Kristensen's succinct words are often quoted: 'Every believer looks upon his own religion as a unique, autonomous and absolute reality. It is of absolute value and thus incomparable'.³⁹

To find the philosophical, religious 'essence' of the phenomena is for Kristensen of greater importance than the empirical grouping of the religious data into common themes.⁴⁰ For example, the general category 'sacrifice' may be designated as a category of religion because it contains not only a measure of the 'essence' of religion, but also that the ritual 'sacrifice' is present in most religions. He groups together the different forms of the category 'sacrifice' for comparison with similar categories from other religions. He offers another general category, the typology of 'kingship'. Thus Kristensen classifies religious data according to certain patterns of similarity, what 'sacrifice' or 'kingship' is itself, a 'separate historical datum'.⁴¹ However, his premise is first to identify the religious 'essence' of the

³⁷ Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 143.

³⁸ Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 6.

³⁹ Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 6.

⁴⁰ Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 280.

⁴¹ Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 2-3.

myriad of data if only for their acceptance or rejection within the grouping procedure.

Kristensen's general similarities may serve to illustrate the problem of confining universal types within a religion-centred category. Equally, some scrutiny is required of the common element of similarity, the religious nature of the 'essence' of religion which classifies the phenomena in the first place. Finally, Kristensen proposes that only a *general* understanding of the data grouped into similarities is possible. Does a general understanding suppose comprehension of the beliefs of the adherent?

2.5.2 Identification of the Issues

A specific example presented by Kristensen of a category of religion that is 'nearly identical' and shares a 'common meaning' is the Greek and Roman concept of 'kingship', a notion Kristensen suggests is to us, strange and "primitive". Because of the paucity of literary material on Greek and Roman kingship, Kristensen justifies classifying similar religious data into ahistorical groups. For a general comparison to be made to the category 'kingship', he suggests that the religious significance of Egyptian kingship 'enables us to understand the sacredness of kingship among the Greeks and Romans'. In other words, Egyptian kingship sheds light upon Greek and Roman kingship. The result is 'a deeper insight into the essence [of religion] of the whole group'. Two issues are identified. The proposed 'nearly identical' nature of the Egyptian concept of kingship to that of the Greeks or Romans carries the implication that the degree of similarity is greater than its difference. Further, in the phenomenological model, the identity of Egyptian kingship is constrained within the parameters of today's concept of 'religion'.

The form and character of Egyptian kingship signifies not only the historical, political, social and economic stability of ancient Egypt but also that the office of kingship symbolises the central institution of the Egyptian state.⁴² 'Religion' or the

⁴² On Egyptian kingship, see Allen, *Middle Egyptian* and sections: Ancient Egyptian Society, 31-33; The King's Names, 64-66. Also Henri Frankfort *et al.*, *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977. 1st publ. 1946), 71-81. On the ideology of divine kingship in connection with the political, social and economic stability of ancient Egypt, see Barry Kemp, *Ancient Egypt*, 20-27.

more appropriate term 'theocracy'⁴³ appears as an integral part of the institutional state of ancient Egypt. The latter is dynamic rather than static; it demonstrates supernatural as well as human historical changes. Consequently, to isolate data from Egypt's historical past may distort the meaning intended by the ancient Egyptians. Equally, to impose a meaning on their data not intended by the Egyptians may be a further misrepresentation. The implication is that the particular, socio-political aspects and other attributes of Egyptian divine kingship, as Kristensen comments, is inappropriately identified with that of the Greeks and Romans.⁴⁴ General similarities of 'nearly identical' phenomena may provide a 'broad-spectrum' understanding of, for example, the category of divine kingship. It fails however to consider the importance of socio-cultural or 'religious' differences inherent in most ancient civilisations.

John Baines offers a similar comparison between ancient Egypt with the world of the Hebrew Bible. Although situated close to each other in the Ancient Near East, Baines finds little comparison between forms of kingship in both societies.⁴⁵ Equally, Henri Frankfort in his book *Kingship and the Gods*, a classic in the field of oriental studies, compares kingship between Egypt and Mesopotamia. He acknowledges the

⁴³ I use the term 'theocracy' in the sense that the institution and the stability of the state of Egypt constitutes rule by the divine office of kingship whose law was absolute. The role of the divine king of Egypt and his reciprocal relationship with the deities of Egypt, form a key element in my thesis.

⁴⁴ Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 5. Kristensen refers to the paucity of information on Greek or Roman 'divine' kings because of their vague or meagre literary materials. But he asserts the divine qualities of the Egyptian king are not in doubt. For aspects of Egyptian divine kingship see Frankfort, *Intellectual Adventure*, 17. In the Introduction, H. and H.A. Frankfort interpret the throne, symbolised as the goddess Isis, as charged with the power of kingship. The king becomes king *only* after sitting on the throne. This male/female binary motif has no parallel in the Greek or Roman concept of divine kingship; it is peculiar to ancient Egypt. See also W. Brede Kristensen, *Life out of Death: Studies in the Religions of Egypt and of Ancient Greece*, (Louvain: Peeters Press, 1992); Newly translated by H. J. Franken & G. R. H. Wright from the second Dutch Edition, Haarlem 1949. Kristensen compares, with broad strokes, certain aspects of the Egyptian 'religion' with that of the Greeks. Other references and literature relating to Egyptian divine kingship is referred to throughout this thesis.

⁴⁵ John Baines, 'Ancient Egyptian Kingship', 16, in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed., John Day, (Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 16-53. For a comparison between Egyptian and Mesopotamian kingship see the chapters in Frankfort, *Kingship*. Chapter 15: The Historical Forms of Kingship in Mesopotamia, 215-230; Chapter 17: The Making of a King, 231-248. The secular term *lugal*, 'king', means 'great man', the creation of the office of kingship and the source of his power lay originally in his 'election' by the assembly of elders of the community. 'When peril threatened, the assembly elected a king to whom it delegated its power', 218. Later, Mesopotamian kingship lost its temporary nature, kings ruled on a 'renewable' mandate from the gods. In contrast with the divine nature of Egyptian kingship, 'a god was king at all times'; the king of Mesopotamia was 'not essentially different from men', 225. See also Thorkild Jacobson, 'Primitive Democracy in Ancient Mesopotamia', *JNES*, 2, 1943:159-172.

similarity of kingship in both cultures as a social institution, yet he points to distinct differences. In the traditional Mesopotamian royal titulary 'every trace of deification is absent'; no reference is made to any distinction between the nature of kings and other men.⁴⁶ One of the five titles of the Egyptian titulary, the title of 'Horus' given to the king at his coronation, signifies that the divine king is the manifestation of the god, Horus who is 'perpetually reincarnated in successive Pharaohs'.⁴⁷ I understand Frankfort's use of the term 'reincarnate' to mean the perpetual re-birth of each reigning king in the *ka* of kingship, rather than the meaning of 'reincarnation' in a Christian sense.⁴⁸

A similar issue relates to the philosophical principles of phenomenology, *epoché* and empathy. Kristensen believes that the phenomenological principle of empathy was 'to relive in his own experience that which is "alien"'.⁴⁹ I understand his comment to mean that his experience as a human being may identify with the human being whose religious beliefs are foreign to him. Alternatively, the empathic relationship may understand and identify a mutual 'religious' experience. Nonetheless, his later comment on the symbol of divine kingship seems at variance with the principle of empathy: 'For us they are only "symbols" because their sacred nature is as impossible for us to conceive as is the Ancient significance of kingship'.⁵⁰ Similarly, the key concept of the religious nature of the formation of the universal categories of religion is the premise that 'we use our own religious experience in order to understand the experience of others'. This is not to say that the concept of a universal 'religiousness' is improbable, rather that Kristensen appears to identify his own religious experience as a Christian, with the universal 'essence' of religion.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Frankfort, *Kingship*, 230.

⁴⁷ Frankfort, *Kingship*, 231. See also Allen, *Middle Egyptian*, 31-33.

⁴⁸ The concept of the *ka* of kingship is discussed in detail in chapters three, four and six.

⁴⁹ Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 7.

⁵⁰ Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 409.

⁵¹ See Sharpe, *Comparative*, 235. For Sharpe, the phenomenologist of religion 'establishes types, patterns, morphologies – all with a view to penetrating the "essence" of religion'. He questions whether scholars can be free of presuppositions: 'Presuppositions are writ large across the whole phenomenological enterprise'. See also Flood, *Phenomenology*, 6. He is concerned about the teaching of world religions that assume 'the nature of religion as having a common essence variously manifest'. For a detailed reference to the 'essence' of religion see Baird, *Category Formation*, 11-14.

The issue of the definition of the 'essence' of religion continues with Kristensen's methodology, his two-type evolutionary theory. Given his dismissal of the comparative method of the History of Religion to grade different religions into a lower or higher scale, Kristensen proposes the superiority of Christianity. 'In religion as well as the rest of our culture we stand on the apex of the historical pyramid'.⁵² As I understand the issue, the tension results from a subjective identity with the 'essence' of religion. Kristensen associates philosophically the 'religious' values of the historical type handed down to succeeding generations, as the 'essence of religion'. In grouping together categories of similarities, the scholar, he argues, must separate the 'essentially religious' from the systemised, historical data but he 'must have a feeling for religion' in order to identify the essential 'essence' of religion. His priority is towards the religious nature of the data rather than its historical connection. In the search for the 'religious essence', Kristensen reveals the influence of his Christian theology on the formation of 'the essence of religion': 'The essence – the divine will - remains impenetrable, for no man penetrates the council of God'.⁵³

Kristensen demonstrates the issue further; he offers his view on Egyptian 'religion'. The task of philosophers, he suggests, is to 'investigate what religious value the believers (Greeks, Babylonians, Egyptians, etc.) attached to their faith'. Following his premise of validation by the adherents of their beliefs, he stresses that he is interested in what religion meant for them, the adherents. 'It is *their* religion that we want to understand, and not our own and we are therefore not concerned here with the essence of religion, for this is necessarily expressed for us in our own religion'.⁵⁴ Kristensen seems to imply the *absence* of the 'essence' of religion, that the religious aspect of the Greeks, Babylonians and Egyptians may be incomparable because they lack identity with 'our own religion [Christianity]'.

Although Kristensen insists that he seeks to understand the religion of the adherents, '*their* religion', he appears 'not concerned' with understanding the adherent's 'essence of religion'. He assumes that the 'essence of religion', which he

⁵² Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 11-12. See also his evolutionary theory when the primitive forms are seen as 'undeveloped reality' which 'comes to light in full clarity in the highest civilisations and the highest religions'. This seems a contradiction to his earlier remarks of not wishing to grade religions within a higher/lower scale.

⁵³ Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 174.

⁵⁴ Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 13.

identifies with 'our religion', that is Christianity, is the same 'essence' with which he identifies the 'religion' of the 'Greeks, Babylonians, Egyptians, and others'. Whether or not the term 'religion' is inappropriate to the theocratic state of ancient Egypt, Kristensen appears to imply that the universal common element of similarity is the 'essence' of Christianity. Given Kristensen's insistence that, 'Every believer looks upon his own religion as a unique, autonomous and absolute reality',⁵⁵ it is doubtful whether the dogmas and rituals of Christianity are the same as the rituals and beliefs of the ancient Egyptians. There are clear socio-cultural differences.

In the end, given Kristensen's insistence that there is no other religious reality other than the faith of the believer, there is an absence of any textual validation from the adherents, the ancient Greeks, Babylonians or Egyptians. While the scholar, in forming categories, groups the religious data into common themes to find their 'essence',⁵⁶ then looks to the adherents to validate the religious values,⁵⁷ the latter may prove difficult when seeking affirmation from ancient civilisations. Nonetheless, ancient Egyptian texts and iconography may provide significant understanding and validation of the authorial intent of the ancient Egyptians.⁵⁸ I discuss this aspect later in subsequent chapters.

Finally, the deciding factor of Kristensen's philosophical, systematic comparison of religious categories is revealed as, the Spirit: 'We believe we work objectively and scientifically, but the fruitful labour, without any doubt, takes place by the illumination of the Spirit who extends above and beyond our spirit. Let us simply call it intuition – then at least no one will contradict us!'⁵⁹ He argues that ultimate understanding of *alien* religious data is attained only through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit of the Trinity. Kristensen implies that understanding

⁵⁵ Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 6. See also Sharpe, *Comparative*, 229, and his comment that the believer is always right – even though the believer may sometimes 'have been disastrously wrong'. See also the Islamic view in Mujiburrahman, 'The Phenomenological Approach in Islamic Studies', 428, 440, *The Muslim World*, 91, 2001:425-449. Rather than the believer's validation the recognised authority is considered variously as the Qur'an and Sunna, or the Imams of the Shi'ite.

⁵⁶ Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 280.

⁵⁷ See also Eliade, *History of Religions*, 6. Kitagawa refers to criticisms voiced at the 1893 World Parliament of Religions, when the subjective element was considered important, 'to let the adherents of each religion speak for themselves'. See also Flood, *Phenomenology*, 104-108, and his comments on the problem of subjectivity, Husserl, and empathy.

⁵⁸ See chapters five and six when I use the texts of ancient Egypt as their authorial intent.

⁵⁹ Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 10.

ancient Egyptian beliefs, that is alien 'religious' data, may be revealed to him through the Holy Spirit of the Christian God. That he describes the latter as 'intuition' implies that Kristensen may be aware of an adverse response to his imposition of the Christian Spirit as the final arbitrator in the classification of a religious category.⁶⁰ James encapsulates the problem:

While we cannot but be impressed with the genuine spirit of Kristensen's surrender to others and with the depth of meaning he finds in phenomena which for him and for others were hitherto opaque, it remains a question whether the meanings which these phenomena now acquire are the most probable meaning of the phenomena for the *adherents*, or whether given his own religious commitments, they are simply the meaning most intellectually satisfying to Kristensen himself.⁶¹

In the final analysis, the phenomenological principles of empathy and *epoché* appear elusive to Kristensen, given that his proposed 'essence' of religion, the common motif of classifying similarities into groups of universal categories, carries a Christian bias. Nonetheless, although many scholars have identified this key issue, my point is that to identify the 'essence' of religion with the religion of Christianity is to challenge the phenomenological principles of category formation. It may be necessary therefore for students to apply a more rigorous approach to the phenomenological principles of empathy and *epoché*, discussed later in the phenomenological method of van der Leeuw.

Similarly, Kristensen's concept of the autonomy of both the empirical data and the adherents are key phenomenological principles of some significance. The next section seeks to identify any influences Kristensen imposes on his classification of the term 'myth', given his subjective approach to the formation of categories of religion.

2.5.3 Myth: Category of Religion

When 'myth' is classified as a 'category of religion' under the same rubric as Kristensen's category formation, the inherent assumption is that the 'essence' of

⁶⁰ See James, *Interpreting Religion*, 216. 'Kristensen makes the point that the research of the phenomenology of religion is guided by a spirit that transcends us. To avoid a discussion of this subject he calls it intuition'. See also van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 595: 'God reveals Himself as Absolute Spirit'.

⁶¹ James, *Interpreting Religion*, 196. Similarly, James suggests the meaning of the category 'prayer' is that which Kristensen believes 'it *ought* to have had'.

religion which classifies the category 'myth' is derived from the dogmas of Christianity. He refers generally to religious myths and origin myths and compares them to the Genesis account of the Creation of Adam: 'Most of the religions which we know contain theories and doctrines in mythological form concerning the origin of the human race or the creation of the first man'.⁶² He classifies 'myth' as a 'religious' category with different types of creation myths, origin myths, light myths and eschatological myths. His empathic view on myth reflects considerable insight: 'The religious myth is always an attempt to express the inexpressible and make it transparent'. Conversely, he continues: 'What we understand by the concept "religious myth" - a story with another and deeper sense than is immediately evident from the story - simply does not exist for the believer'.⁶³ Kristensen explains that 'to an outsider, Christianity also has many myths' referring to the Virgin Mary, the Crucifixion and the Ascension. He concludes:

For the believer this is not a myth, but the adequate formulation of divine reality. So much of what is written about "mythical thinking" is based on a deficient insight into the meaning of "myth" for the believer.⁶⁴

Accordingly, a believer, from a subjective position as the insider, denies the existence of the concept of 'myth' as a category of *their* religion that their sacred texts relate to supernatural beings, creations of a believer's *reality*. Conversely, Kristensen designates the sacred texts of an 'other' religion as 'myths' with no basis in reality. In short, he appears to apply a bi-polar, true-false dichotomy to the term 'myth'. On the one hand, he advocates a subjective insider description of the 'truth' value; my 'sacred story' is true. On the other hand, he suggests an outsider, objective view that the sacred texts of adherents of an 'other' or 'alien' belief system are 'false'; 'your sacred story is 'myth', it is false'. James explains: 'Kristensen would apparently consider a demythologized form of Christianity illegitimate',⁶⁵ not because 'myth', as he interprets it, would be unacceptable to a Christian. Rather, Kristensen reasons that *no believer* would consider his or her sacred narratives as

⁶² Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 189.

⁶³ Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 70.

⁶⁴ Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 406.

⁶⁵ See James, *Interpreting Religion*, 188,n.28.

'myth'.⁶⁶ Kristensen, therefore, reiterates the earlier negation of the term 'myth' and appears to invalidate the taxonomy 'myth' as a universal category.

Finally, Kristensen exemplifies further the issue of comparing universal categories that are 'nearly identical'; he gives a specific example in the 'religious' category of water. In his comparative analysis, he distinguishes between the regenerative power of Osiris and the Nile inundation with the Christian concept of the 'living water' of baptism. The former he describes as the 'divine water' that 'purifies and divinizes' the person and concludes: 'This is the Ancient water baptism'. He argues that the Christian Church teaches that through the Holy Spirit the baptismal water creates new life.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, to the minds of the Ancients, continues Kristensen, no Spirit was necessary since the water itself not only performed the miracle, it was also conceived as a living being, as a god, that is, the Egyptian god Osiris. He concludes: 'What they [the Ancients] beheld as the reality of water is no longer a reality for us, because we think and perceive in the enlightened Greek way, not in the Ancient way'.⁶⁸

Although the so-called 'fertility' symbol of Osiris and the Nile inundation motif creates new life in the regeneration of the land, any corollary with the Christian ritual of baptism and the 'forgiveness of sin' is absent in ancient Egyptian culture. Similarly, the inundation of the Nile fails to either 'purify' or 'divinize' the person in the Christian sense; its focus is to impregnate the land for new growth.⁶⁹ Thus while there is slight similarity in the substance of the category water, the socio-cultural differences deny any comparison of substance.

In summary, James suggests that if there is tension between Kristensen's dual role as a phenomenologist and a theologian, then 'it is hard to understand how Kristensen can justify such extensive use of his own theological understanding in the

⁶⁶ Cf. see 69 below and Kristensen's comment: 'It is impossible for us to believe this'. Chapter four explores in detail the dichotomy of the believer and non-believer, true-false nature of 'myth'.

⁶⁷ The Spirit in question is the Spirit of the Holy Trinity of Christianity, referred to earlier.

⁶⁸ Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 408-409. Kristensen continued: 'If we really believed it in all seriousness the way the Ancients did, we too should have to worship water as a divine being, for of course it is only God who creates. It is impossible for us to believe this'. For a detailed account of Osiris, see J. Gwyn Griffiths, *The Origins of Osiris and his Cult*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980).

⁶⁹ See Frankfort, *Kingship*, 190-212, and the multifarious forms of Osiris as the son of Geb and Nut, the grain, the Nile, Orion, the moon, *Lord of the West*. See especially, 190-195.

interpretation of the religion of others'.⁷⁰ Because Kristensen believes that the term 'religion' is not only a universal concept but is also *sui generis*, he assumes his own religious experience will provide him with the closest understanding of the phenomenon under scrutiny. Consequently, when Kristensen comments that 'the reality in the myth is no longer a reality for us',⁷¹ he appears to understand what is alien only when deciphered through the lens of Christianity. Kristensen's main criterion, that the phenomenologist should seek the testimony of the believer for final affirmation, seems to have failed the practical test. Kristensen appears unable to bracket his own Christian subjectivity. If phenomenologists of religion impose their beliefs on the believers of other cultures or 'religions', then the fundamental principles of phenomenology appear in jeopardy.

Kristensen implies that the so-called 'myths' or narratives of ancient Egypt *must* contain that vital 'essence of religion', an essential requirement for the formation of all 'categories of religion'. Equally, that the 'essence' of religion, the common element of similarity, is identified with the religion of Christianity. If, as Kristensen believes, his own religious experience in a Christian sense is the essence of commonality, then the deciding factor in all 'religions', whether or not their data is elected as a religious category, is Christianity. If Egyptian culture is accepted by Kristensen within the parameters of 'religion', then the implication is that the 'religiousness' of the ancient Egyptians was identical to the 'religiousness' of Christianity.

Other factors of dissent I suggest are Kristensen's ahistorical comparative approach to categories and his theories of generalisations whether or not his methodology ultimately provides the ontologically real understanding of 'other' religions. Did his student, van der Leeuw offer a more positive approach to the formation of categories of religion and in particular the classification of 'myth' as a typology of religion? How did van der Leeuw determine the criterion for a 'religious typology'? What was his justification, if any, for classifying 'myth' as a 'religious category'?

⁷⁰ James, *Interpreting Religion*, 202.

⁷¹ Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 404.

2.6 Gerardus van der Leeuw (1890-1950)

Van der Leeuw studied theology at the University of Leiden achieving his Th.D degree in 1916 under the tutelage of his teacher Kristensen. He was not only appointed to the new chair of the History of Religions in the Faculty of Theology at the University of Groningen, he also became a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church in 1918. The theological problems of the first half of the twentieth century resulted in the secularization of Dutch society and the theological crisis in Dutch Protestantism. Van der Leeuw identified himself with 'ethical theology' and to reform generally in the Church.⁷²

2.6.1 Van der Leeuw: 'Ideal Types'

Van der Leeuw's approach to the study of religion was similar to that of his mentor, Kristensen; rather than to explain religions his aim was to understand religious phenomena. Equally, the aim of both phenomenologists was to group common elements of similarities into typologies. However van der Leeuw differs from Kristensen in his search for similarities; Kristensen aims to generalise the religious phenomena whereas van der Leeuw seeks the meaning of the phenomena as it 'appears' to him.

Rather than first grouping together similar forms of religious data, van der Leeuw aspires first to the meaning of religious phenomena, the thing in itself, 'what appears', or what is manifest to him.⁷³ Only then does he classify the data into different types. With this purpose in mind, van der Leeuw's phrase seems to clarify his human-centred search for comprehension: 'the understanding of a connection, or of a person, or event, *dawns on us*'.⁷⁴ The 'dawning' process results from a psychological technique of re-experiencing religious meanings using empathy; van der Leeuw seeks to contemplate the religious 'essence' of the phenomenon rather than to comprehend its factual existence.⁷⁵ For van der Leeuw therefore a profound

⁷² See Jacques Waardenburg, 'Religion between Reality', 161-162, 161,n.89, 183,n.132.

⁷³ See James, *Interpreting Religion*, 209.

⁷⁴ Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 673. See also Waardenburg, 'Religion between Reality', 161.

⁷⁵ Waardenburg, *Classical Approaches*, 401. Van der Leeuw's concept of empathy is defined as 'transposing oneself into the object, or re-experiencing it'.

subjective-objective interrelationship exists between the research object and the researcher.⁷⁶

His methodology appears to emphasise a positive tension in his subjective/objective approach in the formation of typologies of religion. Following Kristensen, he proposes that the object under scrutiny is incomprehensible from the outside by the objective processing of data. Rather than using traditional empirical methods of quantifying, enumerating or measuring methods, van der Leeuw argues that religious data is understood first, subjectively, only from the inside.⁷⁷ Accordingly, van der Leeuw, like Kristensen, seeks to endorse an intuitive analysis of the religious data.⁷⁸ Kristensen agrees that a 'rational and systematic study of religion is impossible', that 'a certain amount of intuition is indispensable'. He too proposes an inter-relationship 'between feeling and factual knowledge'.⁷⁹

As I understand van der Leeuw, he seeks to validate the meaning of the religious data using intuition to understand the intentions of the adherent. Kristensen offers a different method; rather than the data conveying the intentions of the adherent, he refers to the *adherents* themselves to validate the religious data. Van der Leeuw connects the religious phenomena, 'what appears' in his intuitive process, to the primal past and historical present of the individual's *experience*, there is an interrelationship between the phenomena itself, and to whom it 'appears'. In contrast, Kristensen suggests an uncertain relationship between the 'Ancient', irrational type and the 'Modern', rational type. Further, to classify the similar types of religious data into typologies or categories, 'what appears' to van der Leeuw lacks reality; it is a 'mirror-image' of the religious data. Kristensen, on the other hand, classifies empirical data into groups of general similarities; abstract forms of divine kingship, sacrifice and water are some examples.

Van der Leeuw acknowledges that a subjective approach is the first step towards understanding religious data; the connection is the natural affinity of our

⁷⁶ I discuss this aspect of van der Leeuw's methodology in chapter five.

⁷⁷ Kristensen stresses the importance of intuition, although its source is that of the 'Spirit'.

⁷⁸ Waardenburg, *Classical Approaches*, 402. See also Flood, *Phenomenology*, 165. This phrase has been mis-typed, I have assumed that the printers have omitted the 'not': 'analyses in an intuitive manner,[not] in a rational manner'.

⁷⁹ Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 10.

common identity as human beings. He differentiates rightly between comprehension of the ancient past and the unattainable access to actual lived experience of the Ancients. For van der Leeuw, comprehension is the result of a subjective-objective interrelationship between 'meaning: my meaning, and *its* meaning'.⁸⁰ Thus the core of van der Leeuw's phenomenology is towards understanding rather than explanation. The subjectivity of the scholar, he astutely argues, is an indispensable datum since, to understand the object, its affect must be experienced by the researcher.⁸¹

Barry Kemp, an archaeologist and Professor in Egyptology at the University of Cambridge, concurs. His scientific understanding as an archaeologist, a human-centred discipline, is the study of an ancient culture of which personal validation by the adherents is impossible. Instead, archaeological artefacts, temple and tomb reliefs, as well as textual data, convey a semblance of understanding of the intent of the ancient Egyptians. This human-centred approach to understanding the socio-cultural beliefs of the ancient Egyptians will form the framework of chapter four. Although his language is different, Kemp concludes with a subtle awareness of our common bond as human beings to understand and share human experiences. Following van der Leeuw, Kemp offers a subjective-objective interrelationship in which the meaning of the archaeologist and the meaning of the artefacts combine in profound comprehension. Kemp nullifies any inferior or superior comparison.

We all share, and have in the past shared, a common consciousness and substratum of unconscious behaviour. We all face now, and have faced in the past, the same basic experience...That is the crucial message of biology, of the fact that we are all of the same species. *Progress has not made us into superior beings.*⁸² (my emphasis).

⁸⁰ Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 673. See also James, *Interpreting Religion*, 204, and his comment on the understanding of van der Leeuw: 'It is the essence of his life as lived. And it constitutes, when consciously carried out, the central activity of phenomenology'. This aspect will be discussed in chapter five.

⁸¹ See Waardenburg, 'Religion between Reality', 163-165. If understanding of religious data is the premise of both van der Leeuw's and Kristensen's methodology, a subjective approach is indispensable. The problem is, to what extent does the subjectivity of the scholar permeate the religious data. If, as I discuss later in chapter three within a Greek context, the scholar holds profound religious or cultural beliefs, then his subjectivity may bias his understanding of the data. I should emphasise that this should not detract from the positive subjective-objective method which results in understanding the insider view.

⁸² Kemp, *Ancient Egypt*, 1-2.

Thus, a subjective human-centred approach appears in contrast with Kristensen's divisive approach of civilisation in which he compares the rational 'Modern type' unfavourably to the inferior, irrational 'Ancient type'.⁸³ The latter is similar to the earlier comparative method of the history of religion rejected by Kristensen, that of scaling religions as 'higher' or 'lower', superior or inferior.

Consequently, van der Leeuw's proposal for a subjective-objective interrelationship appears in agreement with the phenomenological principles of *epoché* and empathy as tools to 'experience' what 'appears' to the researcher. Equally, his comprehension of the religious phenomena is the premise towards classifying empirical data into groups of similarities. Only then may the phenomenologist or researcher describe the data with empathy; only then may the adherent validate the objective description of their religious phenomena. Sharpe describes van der Leeuw's profound awareness of the human propensity to compare the ancient and the modern civilisations in a positive primitive-modern ratio:

'Primitivity', he maintains, [van der Leeuw] is to be found everywhere; it is not a difference between two men, but a difference within men, which is involved. Alongside the civilised qualities there are the qualities of intuition and instinct, and between these two there may be a deep discord. He suggests that in this discord it may well be that the mind of Western man has taken a disastrous turn somewhere along the road: that 'logical thought', so far from being a norm by which all else is to be judged, may possibly itself be an aberration or a deviation from intuitive values and standards.⁸⁴

Notwithstanding van der Leeuw's awareness of the human propensity to comprehend each other, it is important to scrutinise further his method of classifying typologies or categories of religion into 'Ideal Types'.⁸⁵ On the one hand, for van der

⁸³ For a description of Kristensen's two types of 'civilisation, the Ancient irrational and Modern rational, see Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 18-20. See also James, *Interpreting Religion*, 176-177. According to James, the Ancient and Modern types 'may not be the most persuasive feature of Kristensen's thought' and comments: 'Kristensen's effort to distinguish the "Ancient" from the "Modern" types of civilisation is among the most problematic of his ideas'. The latter he claims are 'the intellectual history of the West'. See also 177, n.4.

⁸⁴ Sharpe, *Comparative*, 193-194. Sharpe connects van der Leeuw's concept of a universal 'primitivity' to Levy-Bruhl's 'primitive mentality', and comments that 'he is claiming one thing, and achieving another: claiming to distinguish between levels of developing or evolving culture, and in reality describing what appears to be a universal characteristic of the human mind at all times and in all places'. See also Kemp, *Ancient Egypt*, 1-2, and his comment: 'Past and present, we are all – readers of this text and ancient Egyptians alike – members of the same species, *Homo sapiens*, equipped with a brain that physically has remained unchanged since our species emerged'.

⁸⁵ The concept of the 'Ideal Type' of van der Leeuw is discussed in more detail in chapter five.

Leeuw, 'religiousness' can only be found in the religious lives of persons and communities; the 'religion of each individual is distinct'.⁸⁶ On the other hand, the religious phenomenon, rather than the reality of the object itself, is a mirror-image, a reflection of reality. The religious element, therefore, manifests itself to van der Leeuw. This is his justification to classify general 'types' of analogous religious phenomena into groups. What is manifest, 'whether it concerns a person, a historical situation or a religion, is called a *type*, or an *ideal type*'.⁸⁷ His concept of the Ideal connects not only to a template in which religious phenomena are measured but also to the unworldly indefinable 'essence' of religion.

As I understand van der Leeuw the empirical object does not appear to him; rather it is the 'essence' or the indefinable 'religious element' of the object that is manifest to him. It is only at this stage that he identifies, then assigns 'names' to the objects of religion: 'sacrifice', 'prayer', 'saviour', and 'myth'. Van der Leeuw stresses that what is manifest to him is not the actual object but a reflection only of the phenomenon, that is, its 'religious element'. Rather than to seek knowledge from the empirical phenomena, van der Leeuw aims for reciprocal *comprehension* of that 'reflection', both the object and the subjective-objective. The final outcome is reciprocal comprehension; recognition and identification of the religious 'essence' of the phenomena.

For James, the process appears intuitive and elusive: 'We see it darkly, not clearly. It is mediated, not direct'.⁸⁸ Here is van der Leeuw's profound concept of 'universal primitivity', that form of knowing which, according to van der Leeuw, is human-centred, and relates to the 'universal characteristic of the human mind'. Given that Kristensen separates his rational 'Modern type' from the irrational 'Ancient type' of civilisation,⁸⁹ van der Leeuw identifies a unity within humanity as a whole.

⁸⁶ James, *Interpreting Religion*, 243. See also further discussion by James.

⁸⁷ Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 673.

⁸⁸ James, *Interpreting Religion*, 230-231. James is certain that the allusion is to the words of St. Paul, 'For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known' (I Cor. 13:12). What seems sublime is James' observation that it is not a lens but a mirror reflection of one's own face. 'For van der Leeuw this is not the liability but the profundity of the phenomenological study'. Yet there is a sense that van der Leeuw's religious beliefs are part of that reflection.

⁸⁹ See Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 18-20, for a detailed account of his two-type civilisation model and his two-type Evolutionary theory.

Accordingly, van der Leeuw's intuitive methodology emphasises his subjective/objective approach in the formation of typologies. What 'appears' in the process of reciprocal understanding is his own reflection, the mirror image of humanity. For van der Leeuw, the image he sees is a reflection of his belief that Christianity is embedded in the 'Being' of every 'created' human being. He explains that it is through our understanding as human beings that we recognise and identify the 'religiousness' of human beings. With this in mind, van der Leeuw's intuitive process reveals an issue of some substance. For Kristensen, intuition was revealed by the Spirit. For van der Leeuw intuition was an active, reciprocal, subjective-objective experience, revealed by God.

2.6.2 Identification of the Issues

. Rather than the principle of *epoché*, van der Leeuw, like Kristensen, identifies his Christians beliefs with the element of commonality, the 'essence of religion'. Van der Leeuw's attitude towards comprehension of religious data is only best understood from within the Christian tradition. He explains his concept of 'comprehension' from a philosophical stance:

[U]ltimately all comprehension is "becoming understood" then means that [sic], ultimately, all love is "becoming loved"; that all human love is only the response to the love that was bestowed upon us. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us... we love him, because he first loved us".⁹⁰

Van der Leeuw follows Kristensen's belief that the concept of the 'essence' of religion is synonymous with the religion of Christianity. Comprehension of the 'essence' of the phenomena that is manifest to van der Leeuw is 'revealed' to him by God. This is similar to the Spirit or 'intuition' discussed earlier as the source of Kristensen's understanding of the 'essence' of religion.

Consequently, ancient civilisations in general and ancient Egyptians in particular are unable to validate or identify the characteristics of the Christian God with the diverse divine powers contained within their multiplicity of deities. It seems inappropriate that van der Leeuw's unique classification of Ideal Types is described in universal terms as typologies of 'religion' if, like Kristensen, his final

⁹⁰ Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 684. The latter phrase is taken from I John iv.10, 19. See also comments by Sharpe, *Comparative*, 233.

comprehension is attributed to Christian theology. In this context, the term 'religious' implies and appears interchangeable with the term 'Christian', which by default is foreign to other 'religions'. Rather than leading to understanding of other 'religions', the Christian overlay distorts the reality of the adherents.

James observes that 'it is difficult to deny that van der Leeuw's treatment of religion displays an ordering of types and structures that seem to find its fulfilment in what appears to him in the Christian tradition'.⁹¹ Sharpe, too, is critical of van der Leeuw's theological statement, 'claiming as it does to define an aspect of "God's utterance"'. He adds that 'it is apparent from whole traces of van der Leeuw's phenomenology that, although he may not be 'doing theology' in the narrower dogmatic sense, his whole approach is basically theological (quite apart from his treatment of Christianity)'.⁹² Sharpe identifies also the term 'theology' with Christianity, that for van der Leeuw, 'religion is neither more nor less than *given*'. He summarises the five stages of van der Leeuw's phenomenological method and in a footnote underscores the theological [Christian] stance of van der Leeuw: 'Once more it must be stressed that to attempt to interpret van der Leeuw other than in theological terms is ultimately a self-defeating procedure'.⁹³

However, in defence of both Kristensen and van der Leeuw, James offers an explanation. While he acknowledges that van der Leeuw views the study of religion from a Christian perspective in that 'Christianity cannot but be regarded as the central form of historical religions', he believes that van der Leeuw does not actually declare the *de facto* superiority of Christianity. Given that he begins from his own Christian religious experience, whilst using restraint to achieve the understanding he seeks, van der Leeuw argues that the phenomenology of religion could also be set out by another person from another standpoint. In this phenomenology of religion he concludes, the other religion's position would emerge as the crown of the history of religion.⁹⁴ The dilemma is that van der Leeuw seeks an ahistorical comprehension of the religious phenomena in 'what appears' to him, the religion of the scholar as the

⁹¹ James, *Interpreting Religion*, 235.

⁹² Sharpe, *Comparative*, 233.

⁹³ Sharpe, *Comparative*, 234. See also Strenski, *Four Theories*, 116-117. I will discuss van der Leeuw's phenomenological model in detail in Chapter five from a different perspective.

⁹⁴ See James, *Interpreting Religion*, 238-239.

crown of history is not an issue. Rather it is that the religion of the scholar is the crown of religion. Van der Leeuw continues in his own defence:

It would therefore be quite possible, in itself, for a Buddhist to set out the phenomenology of religion, with his own as a starting point; and then he would naturally discover the culmination of religion in Buddhism. Whether he would be "right" in so doing is, however, not a matter for phenomenology itself to decide, but for theology or metaphysics. But he would be unable to proceed in any other way.⁹⁵

Following Kristensen, Van der Leeuw and James appear to suggest that the core phenomenological principles of empathy and *epoché* are probabilities only, that to bracket fully our own religion or beliefs in order to understand an 'other' religion may be attainable only in some measure or degree. Kristensen elucidates the issue mentioned earlier; 'Indubitable certitude or clarity cannot be obtained and, indeed, can never be reached when we are seeking understanding, but we can come to the greatest attainable probability'.⁹⁶

In the end, while van der Leeuw's model appears to offer a theoretical framework of the fundamental phenomenological principles, *epoché* and empathy, like Kristensen he appears unable to bracket fully his own beliefs. In his desire to comprehend religious phenomena, van der Leeuw's claim that 'we understand ourselves in God', seems to be the definitive affirmation of his Christian theology. The question is whether the issue is perpetuated given that van der Leeuw includes the category 'myth' as an Ideal Type of religion, the essence of which has been established as that of Christianity. He described his systematic approach with a Christian slant: 'Man first names his experiences according to their type, exactly as Adam named the animals'.⁹⁷

2.6.3 Myth: 'Ideal Type' of Religion

Van der Leeuw begins his five-page chapter on 'myth'⁹⁸ with a quotation from Jane Harrison that 'myth is nothing other than the word itself'.

⁹⁵ Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 646. This chapter is called, 'The Religion of Love', most of which centres around Christianity.

⁹⁶ Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 6.

⁹⁷ Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 148.

⁹⁸ See van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 413-417.

For it is neither speculation nor poem, neither a primitive explanation of the world nor a philosophy in embryo, although it also may be, and indeed frequently is, all of these. It is a spoken word, possessing decisive power in its repetition; just as the essential nature of sacred action consists in its being repeated, so the essence of myth lies in its being told, in being repeatedly spoken anew.⁹⁹

Although there seems little substance on the subject of myth in van der Leeuw's chapter on 'Myth', the comments by Harrison are not fully indicative of van der Leeuw's analysis of myth expressed in his later chapters. Initially, he specifies myth as an 'Ideal Type'. He includes in this typology: saga, legend, and fairy tales and differentiates between these different types.¹⁰⁰ Myth, he agrees, is none other than the word itself, and adds, it is also a 'verbal celebration': it has power in its repetition and timelessness, yet it is the actuality of the event.¹⁰¹ Describing saga, his second type of myth, he comments that myth forms part of the saga. Myth, 'the *motif* of the saga', he argues, is 'eternally present'. It attaches itself to the saga; it is always historical, and refers 'wholly to the past'.¹⁰² His third type is the timelessness of the fairy tale; their figures have neither history nor names. The importance of their exact repetition is also a factor in their inclusion as a type of myth. The religious element he sees in fairy tales is present also in his short comment on legend: its mythical and saga-like content 'approaches pious contemplation'.¹⁰³ In his chapter on 'myth', van der Leeuw appears to agree with the traditional definitions of the term myth, the eternal timelessness of a sacred story and the power of each repetition.¹⁰⁴ However, there is an absence in this chapter of any reference to the defining 'essence' of religion which identifies each Ideal Type as typology of religion.

⁹⁹ The previous sentence begins van der Leeuw's chapter on Myth and forms part of the quotation from Jane Harrison, *Themis, A Study of the Social Origins of the Greek Religion*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1912), 328. Quoted in van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 413, n.1.

¹⁰⁰ For the speculative thought of myth see Frankfort, *Intellectual Adventure*, 7. 'True myth' should be 'distinguished from legend, saga, fable and fairy tale' ... that myths 'are products of the imagination,' but they are not mere fantasy'.

¹⁰¹ The key concepts of the term 'myth' not only as 'the actuality of an event' but also as a concept of 'Power' will be discussed in chapters five and six.

¹⁰² Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 415.

¹⁰³ Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 416-417. See also Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 402. Kristensen associates myth with fairy tale: 'The myth has, to be sure, the form of a fairy tale'.

¹⁰⁴ The traditional definitions of the term 'myth' will be discussed later in the Eliade section of this chapter.

In later chapters, Van der Leeuw's analysis on the typology 'myth' corresponds with his earlier Christian-influenced 'essence' of religion. Given that he proposes that the common element present in myth, a *hieros logos* or a sacred story, centres on the Christian doctrine of salvation, he describes the sacred events whether enacted or recited, as 'salvation stories'. He gives the Egyptian myth of Isis and Osiris¹⁰⁵ as an example of a salvation typology. The drama, the actuality of the myth itself, suggests van der Leeuw, 'implies the "salvation" of the hearer and spectator'.¹⁰⁶ Of some significance is the absence in Egyptian texts, iconography, or temple reliefs of any reference to 'salvation' in a Christian redemptive sense.¹⁰⁷ Rather, texts and iconography identify Osiris primarily with immortality and Egyptian kingship in the Netherworld, as the father of Horus, the consort of Isis, the fecundity of the land and others forms.¹⁰⁸ There are many epithets of Osiris, none of which include names of a salvatory nature.¹⁰⁹

Van der Leeuw believes that because the 'salvation motif' in the story of Christ is the focal point of the re-enactments of the *hieros logos* in Christian worship, it is the essential universal element in all sacred stories. Moreover, while the ethos of Christianity is determined in the announcements and events of Jesus Christ as Saviour; van der Leeuw identifies both Christ and the Egyptian god Osiris as Saviour figures.¹¹⁰ On the one hand, van der Leeuw concludes: 'For such a form [of

¹⁰⁵ Plutarch's so-called myth of Isis and Osiris will be discussed in detail in chapter three; it serves as an example of literature acting as an 'authority of text' in that Plutarch's version perpetuates the misconception of the 'truth' of the myth of Isis and Osiris. Van der Leeuw follows a similar misinterpretation when he identifies the salvation motif of Christianity with the beliefs of ancient Egypt. As I understand van der Leeuw, his propensity to see the salvation motif in Egypt and other cultures signifies that his own Christian belief in the soteriological nature of Jesus Christ is a universal motif of salvation for all humankind.

¹⁰⁶ Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 419.

¹⁰⁷ Although there is evidence of an ancient Egyptian god, Shed, the saviour, later identified with a young form of the king, Horus-Shed, the saving aspect concerned saving Egyptians from harmful noxious creatures. See 105 above. See also discussion on Horus-Shed in my Case Study, chapter six.

¹⁰⁸ For the various forms of Osiris, see Erik Hornung, *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), 68, 281.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Hornung, *Conceptions*, 90, quoted from Ramadan el Sayad, *Documents relatifs à Sais et ses divinités* (IFAO BE 69, 1975), 14-16.

¹¹⁰ See also James, *Interpreting Religion*, 234. James is critical of van der Leeuw's inability to see beyond his own Christian theology when he 'submits Christ to comparison with Osiris while he regards each as a saviour in the full sense of the word'. See also the Christian salvation motif in Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 401. Kristensen comments that the representation of the god of the temple 'is the saviour in death over the waters of death'.

salvation] is essential to every myth'.¹¹¹ On the other hand, like Kristensen discussed earlier, van der Leeuw refutes the presence of 'myth' in Christianity with words of deprecation; 'the *hieros logos* of Christianity is not merely a myth'.¹¹² The apparent innocuous phrase 'merely a myth' carries a hidden agenda of some significance. Allen offers a view which is probably accepted by most contemporary scholars: 'to say that something is 'merely' a myth is to point out that it is 'fiction' or 'illusion', an 'unreal' and uncritical 'invention' of the imagination, and as such is distinguished from and even opposed to 'reality'.¹¹³ A sacred story exists in Christianity but its presence is denied when *hieros logos* is given the name 'myth'. The implication is that the taxon 'myth' in a phenomenological sense is denied a universal position not only as an Ideal Type but also a typology of religion in a phenomenological sense.

Another inter-related example of equal importance is demonstrated when van der Leeuw argues that the 'Word of God' as an Ideal Type is present in other religions. He compares the Christian doctrine of the 'Word of God' with the Greek concept of the 'Word', often translated in Christian terms as the *logos*. The Greek *logoi* is identified by van der Leeuw as the 'Power of God', a concept which he asserts was 'subsequently in Christendom'.¹¹⁴ He compares also the Christian term 'the Word of God' with the Egyptian creation story in the Memphite Theology in which the god, Ptah creates the world. Rather than the spoken word, the initial impulse of creation arose in his heart. Only then are the words spoken and written down by the god Thoth, an action often described with some inaccuracy as 'creation

¹¹¹ Van der Leeuw, *Essence of Religion*, 420. See also Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 404. Kristensen comments that the 'reality of the myth is no longer a reality for us' and therefore he asserts, because they always have a form of the fairy tale, although not to be taken as simple fairy tales, they are far removed from our faith and our view of the world. He claims: 'This is true of all myths'.

¹¹² Van der Leeuw, *Essence of Religion*, 419. See also Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 406. For Kristensen, the believer 'does not speak of his "myths", but rather of his "sacred traditions", for instance the *hieros logos* at Eleusis'.

¹¹³ Douglas Allen, *Structure and Creativity in Religion*, (The Hague: Mouton, 1978), 13. He continues that for cultures in which myth is 'living', myth means 'true story' in the sense of 'sacred tradition'.

¹¹⁴ In this section my purpose is to give brief examples of the assumptions held by van der Leeuw, if only to demonstrate his theological affinity to Christian doctrines in his role as a practicing Theologian. The *logos/mythos* debate, and the presupposition that the Greek notion of *logos* equated to the Christian 'Word of God', will be discussed in chapter four.

by the word'. Van der Leeuw interprets the Memphite text as the Egyptian version of the Christian 'theology of the word'.¹¹⁵

Van der Leeuw explained his subjective approach to Christian theology and Christian doctrines: 'The pre-condition of genuine theology is the existence of the church... Myth, doctrine, law, rite are all examined as to their significance for human salvation'.¹¹⁶ Later, when he states that 'God is the actual subject of all theology',¹¹⁷ there is, intrinsic within these statements his conviction that the Christian God is 'present' in both the Memphite Theology and the Greek concept of the *logos*. Further, while it may be appropriate to classify ancient Egyptian 'myth' or sacred story as a '*hieros logos*', it is doubtful whether van der Leeuw's universal definition of *hieros logos* as a sacred story of 'salvation' in the Christian sense receives validation by non-Christian adherents. Given that the Christian redemptive nature of salvation equates to the saving of human beings from the penalty of sins in order to achieve eternal happiness, Egyptian texts are silent on this subject.¹¹⁸

Although key aspects of Egyptian kingship are discussed in the following chapters as a framework for a new hermeneutic of the term 'myth', a brief illustration of the issue of comparing general typologies of similarities is necessary. Given that there are general similarities in the concept of the Christian 'Word', the Greek '*logos*', and the Egyptian 'word', when placed in the context of each culture, the intentions of the adherent reveal differences. I discuss in some detail the term '*logos*' in chapter three, therefore, I will demonstrate here a contextual difference in the concept of the 'word' in ancient Egypt.

¹¹⁵ Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 421. Rather than the words of creation, the initial impulse arose in the heart. See also Miriam Lichtheim, *AEL*, Vol.1:54, (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1975). 'Sight, hearing, breathing – they report to the heart, and it makes every understanding come forth. As to the tongue, it repeats what the heart has devised. Thus all the gods were born and his Ennead was completed. For every word of the god came about through what the heart devised and the tongue commanded'. See also J.B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 5. '...it is the tongue that announces what the heart thinks'. 5,n.15 elaborates: 'The senses report to the heart. With this reported material, the heart conceives and releases thought, which the tongue, as a herald, puts into effective utterance'. See also Frankfort, *Kingship*, 27. Here is an example of the dilemma between the Egyptian concept of 'thinking' and the cerebral scientific meaning of the rational thinking of the brain. I posit that the Egyptians believed the heart, rather than the brain, 'thinks' or 'intuits'.

¹¹⁶ Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 562.

¹¹⁷ Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 564.

¹¹⁸ The ancient Egyptians' belief in eternity will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

The term *heka* (*hk3*), exemplified as royal 'power' or 'energy' often translated as a form of 'magic', is a force made visible in many forms; it is 'swallowed' or 'eaten', it is contained within nets to create order from chaos, it is the creative force in which gods 'come into being by themselves', and it is the creative 'utterance of kings'.¹¹⁹ Hornung describes its power in the spoken or written word: 'When the god's creative word has been pronounced, "magic" [*heka*] ensures that it becomes reality'. Rather than a God in the Christian sense, creation by the word in ancient Egypt is held in the office of the divine king. He holds the power of the creative Utterance; he possesses the creative power of *heka*.¹²⁰

There is certainly a general similarity between the Egyptian term *heka*, associated with the power of 'creative speech' in the Memphite Theology and the story of creation by the Word in the Old Testament (Gen:1:31). Similar also are the opening words of the Gospel of John: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God'. (John 1:1) Nonetheless, the differences identify the disparity of the two cultures: Christians place the salvation motif at the centre of their concept of the Word. Conversely, the core belief of the Egyptians is the creative *reality* of the word, rather than a salvation theme in the Christian redemptive sense. While universal classifications may go some way in grouping similarities, the key differences identify both cultural and contextual distinctions.

In summary, although it may be improbable for the phenomenologist to bracket all religious beliefs, opinions, biases and the like, the aim of the phenomenologist of religion is an undertaking to comprehend the beliefs of others. Van der Leeuw's contends that the phenomenologist has little choice other than to start and end through the mirror image of his own 'religion', whether Buddhist, Muslim or Christian. Like Kristensen, van der Leeuw appears to identify 'religions' in general through the personal prism of his Christian religion rather within the societal context of each religion. When he asserts that a phenomenologist of religion 'would be unable to proceed in any other way', he appears in agreement with Kristensen's 'improbable' stance. This is not to discount the theory that the religious

¹¹⁹ *Heka* may be transliterated as either *hk3* (HkA) or *hk3* (HqA) — I have chosen to use the form *hk3*.

¹²⁰ See Hornung, *Conceptions*, 208-209. See also Allen, *Middle Egyptian*, 156-157, on the creative Word and creation generally.

element of commonality suggested by phenomenologists is present in human beings, whether within the cultural context of the Buddhist, Muslim or Christian.

The problem is whether or not the abstract terms, 'religious' and 'religions' can be fully realised. Equally, if 'religion' as a socio-cultural function is described in historical, empirical terms then the identity and beliefs in the diverse forms of the different adherent is respected. Further, if as I argue later in chapter four, whether or not certain aspects of phenomenology support my new socio-cultural hermeneutic of myth, rigorous pursuit of the key issues and fundamental phenomenological principles are then justified. Whether or to what extent it is possible to use *epoché* to bracket one's own religion yet simultaneously remain aware of the elusive concept of religiousness may be difficult, yet I understand it is central to the phenomenological method. Nonetheless, the question remains as to whether total *epoché* is possible or whether a self-reflexive *epoché* would be conducive also to the overall approach.

Conversely, if phenomenologists identify the common element of comparison, the 'essence' of religion, with their own religious belief then phenomenological understanding of other religions may prove untenable. Adherents may be unable to validate realistically the scholar's interpretation of their beliefs, if the universal element of similarity is the 'essence' of Christianity. Kristensen observes the dichotomy, although this too is a point of some scholarly tension: 'We should never be able to describe the essence of religion if we did not know from our own experience what religion is'.¹²¹ As I understand the problem, if comprehension of 'other' religions is the aim of the phenomenologist, then the insider view may be demonstrated only by discussing their differences. Rational thinking corroborates that there are in existence as many different 'types' of religious experience as religious beliefs and within religions themselves there may be many variations.¹²²

The final section demonstrates not only Eliade's broader East-West approach to the phenomenological approach to comparing religions but also his view that cultural differences are necessary for understanding.

¹²¹ Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 10.

¹²² Cf. For different variations within religions, see Mujiburrahman's Islamic view in 'Phenomenological Approach', 91. For different denominations in Christianity, see Tim Dowley, ed., *The History of Christianity*, (Oxford: Lion Publishing, 1996).

2.7 Mircea Eliade (1907-1986)

Mircea Eliade gained his M.A. in Philosophy from the University of Bucharest in 1928. Through a graduate fellowship he studied Sanskrit and Indian philosophy at the University of Calcutta (1928-31) before completing his PhD in 1933 with his dissertation on Yoga. Unlike Kristensen and van der Leeuw, Eliade's background is non-theological. As a historian of religions he taught at the University of Bucharest and the École des Hautes Études of the Sorbonne, Paris; he finally joined the University of Chicago in 1957 as a Professor of the History of Religions.¹²³ He is generally considered a phenomenologist of religion.¹²⁴

2.7.1 Eliade: 'Hierophanies'

Eliade offers what seems a radically different approach to the methodologies of Kristensen and van der Leeuw. Kristensen's method was towards understanding religious data, to seek validation from the adherent. Van der Leeuw's method centred on comprehension of the phenomena by a process of revelation in 'what appears' to the phenomenologist. Eliade's method veers from the narrow approach of Kristensen and van der Leeuw towards a complex system which incorporates the history of religion, phenomenology, hermeneutics, humanism and a new historic-centred concept of the sacred. Given Eliade's broader methodology, my intention remains to determine his method of classifying data into typologies of religion. With regard to the complex structure of Eliade's system of total hermeneutics, to limit my re-appraisal to merely describing Eliade's concept of 'hierophany', his term for defining religious data, would fail to give credit to the interlocking nature of his system. My aim therefore is to limit my scrutiny to key features of Eliade's systematic classifying of data: hierophanies, or 'manifestations of the sacred'; *homo religiosus*, the religious

¹²³ See Cox, *Phenomenology of Religion*, 175-176; Eliade, *Encyclopedia*, 86-90.

¹²⁴ On whether or not Eliade is a phenomenologist, see Allen, *Structure*, 108-111, 240-241; Randall Studstill, 'Eliade, Phenomenology, and the Sacred', in *Religious Studies*, 36, 2000:177-194. See also Mircea Eliade, 'Methodological Remarks on the Study of Religious Symbolism', 88, in Eliade, *History of Religions*. Eliade comments that the historian of religion must 'systemise the results' of his research thus 'he completes his historical work as a phenomenologist or philosopher of religion'. Eliade also considered his work to be creative hermeneutics of which his phenomenology is a part.

'being'; the religio-historic method of classification. There is however some contention among scholars whether Eliade's method is historical or ahistorical.¹²⁵

First, I offer a brief preamble of Eliade's broader approach to the comparative method of religion before introducing his method of classifying types into hierophanies. Eliade observes the methodological dilemma faced by the historian of religions of the mass of religious documents.¹²⁶ Rather than following the History of Religion's systematic method of comparing many religions, Eliade offers an alternative method. He selects a few, and then only some of their aspects, for example, rites, myths, divine forms. Only a manageable number of religions are preferable for a worthwhile comparable analysis.¹²⁷ This method is similar to Kristensen's method that the few may shed light on the many, which links to Eliade's search to identify patterns of similarity in the religious data.

Since not one religion is under scrutiny, but many, Eliade rightly describes the comparative study as a vast, diverse and ill-assorted mass of material. Each document has a particular meaning, part of the culture and the particular time from which it has been detached.¹²⁸ Eliade appears to place importance on the cultural differences and historical context in religious data.¹²⁹ He asks whether scholars have the right to use religious documents indiscriminately, to group them, compare them, or even to manipulate them according to one's own convenience.¹³⁰ His question demonstrates his concern of the methods used previously in the comparative analysis of empirical data. Equally, his words appear to clarify the importance of a cultural presence: 'For whatever its role has been in the past, the comparative study of religion is destined to assume a cultural role of the first importance in the near

¹²⁵ Both Kristensen and van der Leeuw proposed an ahistorical method of comparing religious data. The issue discussed later concerns history and *homo religiosus*.

¹²⁶ Mircea Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, (New York: Harper, 1966), 86.

¹²⁷ Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1958), 1.

¹²⁸ Eliade, *Rites*, 92-93.

¹²⁹ For the historical and cultural aspects of a 'symbol' see Eliade, 'Methodological Remarks', 104-105.

¹³⁰ Eliade, 'Methodological Remarks', 88-89.

future'.¹³¹ Eliade suggests that to understand the cultural values of others it is necessary to know their different religious sources.

The peoples of the West, he argues, no longer have the monopoly as history makers. Instead, non-Westerners analyze and compare the spiritual and cultural values of those who were previously the unquestioned authority. He rightly observes that to the Western mind, Oriental religions may present some hierophanies, sacred entities, which 'the modern man will never come to accept'.¹³² The main obstacle, he argues, is that the Western mind relates all that is sacred, religious or even magical to certain historical forms of the monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.¹³³ While Eliade acknowledges the existence of East-West cultural differences, he places the onus on the West to understand not only these 'foreign' cultures but also Oriental cultural differences. He explained:

The effort expended in correctly understanding ways of thinking that are foreign to the Western tradition – an effort which is, primarily, that of deciphering the meaning of myths and symbols – is repaid by a considerable enrichment of consciousness.¹³⁴

Eliade's comments seem of fundamental value to the comparative principles of phenomenology suggests that a positive approach towards understanding cultures foreign to Westerners may produce a more profound awareness of the true meanings held by different cultures. Equally important to phenomenology is Eliade's insistence not only on the *religious* qualities of the documents, but he urges also understanding of East/West *cultural* differences. Such a religio-cultural partnership appears to offer the phenomenologist of religion a broader and more profound understanding of the cultural nature of religious data.¹³⁵

¹³¹ Mircea Eliade, *The Quest: History and Meaning in Religion*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 2.

¹³² Eliade, *Patterns*, 11. This was certainly the case in regard to the West's initial experience of the gods and goddesses of Egypt.

¹³³ My previous sections on Kristensen and van der Leeuw verify the difficulty experienced by both classical phenomenologists in bracketing their own Christian beliefs. See also Eliade, 'Methodological Remarks', 89.

¹³⁴ Mircea Eliade, *Myth, Dreams and Mysteries*, (London: Collins, 1968), 9.

¹³⁵ A political socio-cultural rather than a religious approach to Egyptian texts which may appear 'foreign', is discussed in later chapters.

Eliade receives some support from a contemporary scholar in the field regarding the issue surrounding the so-called Western-biased term 'religion'. Gavin Flood suggests that to understand beliefs foreign to us, we must actively pursue *differences* within East/West cultures. Flood traces the term 'religion' back to its early roots: 'Religion is an emic, Western category that originated in late antiquity and developed within Christianity as part of that tradition's self understanding'.¹³⁶ Flood qualifies this further:

The abstraction "religion" – along with the abstractions "culture", "mysticism" and "spirituality" – originated in the context of the critique of Christianity in the Enlightenment and the rise of the modern individual, which has since become an etic category in being applied outside of Christianity.¹³⁷

Once valid for one particular culture, the term 'Western Christianity' has become a general statement or overlay for other beliefs; the term 'religion' is another example. For this reason, Flood is aware of the layers of meaning inherent in the term 'religion' because of its association with the West and Christianity. Consequently, it is difficult, Flood reasons, to translate the category 'religion' into non-Western languages on the understanding that the original Christian association may adversely influence other religions. Decades after Eliade had voiced concern, Flood reiterates the problem. Equally, it appears self-perpetuating; when using the term religion outside Christianity as an etic term, the term 'religion' is often identified with Christianity in a Western emic sense.¹³⁸

Eliade seeks reluctantly to broaden the category 'religion' into an East-West universal; his disinclination is not because of a lack of understanding of foreign beliefs, rather because the Westernised term 'religion' carries considerable bias.¹³⁹ A

¹³⁶ Flood, *Phenomenology*, 44.

¹³⁷ Flood, *Phenomenology*, 45. See also Flood's argument on 'religion as a category'. He begins this section: 'It has been notoriously difficult to arrive at a universally acceptable definition of religion and it seems that the task is doomed from the outset', 43-46.

¹³⁸ Kristensen and van der Leeuw are two examples. It also serves to demonstrate the problem of 'myth' as a typology of religion when the term 'religion' carries an overlay of Christianity. See also Smith, 'Religion, Religions', 269. For Smith, in the generic category 'religion' the indicator is usually knowledge of God. In a similar vein, the problem arises when the term 'religion' is applied to the beliefs of ancient Egypt; the issue is exemplified when Egyptian 'myths' are classified as a typology of 'religion'.

¹³⁹ See preface to Eliade, *Quest*. This argument is valid for both Kristensen and van der Leeuw since both classify 'religion' as a universal category. Eliade admits that the term 'religion', to denote the

similar concern by Wilfred Cantwell Smith caused him to propose substitutes for the term religion, with the words 'faith' and 'cumulative tradition', a proposal which failed adoption in Departments of Religious Studies.¹⁴⁰ Eliade argues also that since the Enlightenment '*Religionswissenschaft*' has been operating with Western categories in the study of world religions, in spite of its avowed principles of neutrality and objectivity.¹⁴¹ In the end, Eliade seeks to resolve the issue by re-defining religion within a historical frame of reference. Kristensen classified his religious data into 'categories', van der Leeuw selected the term 'Ideal Types'. If as a Historian of Religion Eliade draws on the empirical method to collect historical religious data for interpretation, described earlier, how does he identify the data as religious? Eliade chooses to name all religious data as hierophanies.¹⁴²

For Eliade there are two forms of phenomena, the sacred and the profane; a hierophany is simply the 'manifestation of the sacred'. The term 'manifestation' recalls van der Leeuw's manifestation or revelation of 'what appears' to him. Similarly the meaning of the term hierophany may be interpreted from the Greek 'hierō', the sacred and 'phainein', to show or to appear. The word hierophany is therefore descriptive of its function, the appearance or manifestation of the sacred. The distinction between the religious, sacred hierophany, and the non-religious profane is a dialectical tension, both co-exist in a paradoxical relationship of 'being' and 'non-being'. Moreover, it is only through the profane that the hierophany is manifest to *homo religiosus*.

In Eliade's comparative method, a phenomenon becomes sacred when it reveals something other than itself. Again this is a concept similar to that proposed by van der Leeuw, that 'what appears' is something other than the empirical phenomenon. For Eliade, the sacred is revealed only through the mundane world, through something natural, historical or profane. The religious experience is linked to the subjective experience of the *homo religiosus* in the belief that what appears to

experience of the sacred, is inadequate, and like Flood, he 'wonders how it [religion] can be indiscriminately applied to the Ancient Near East, Judaism, Christianity', and other 'religions'.

¹⁴⁰ See Cantwell Smith, 'Comparative Religions', 31. See also a critique of his views in Donald Wiebe, 'The Role of "Belief" in the Study of Religion', *Numen*, 26, 1979:234-249 and Cantwell Smith's response, 'Belief: A reply to a Response', in *Numen*, 27, 1980:247-255.

¹⁴¹ Eliade, 'Methodological Remarks', 22.

¹⁴² Allen, *Structure*, 130. For an overall view of Eliade's hierophanies, 124-127; *homo religiosus* in general, 86-87; *homo religiosus* and the meaning for Eliade, 208-210. See also Eliade, *Patterns*, 1-33.

him or her is the manifestation of something other than the profane, that is, the sacred. The idea of separating the religious hierophany from non-religious data seems superfluous; Eliade believes that all phenomena at one time or another have been a hierophany. He explained:

But somewhere, at a given time, each human society chose for itself a certain number of things, animals, plants, gestures and so on, and turned them into hierophanies.; and as this has been going on for tens of thousands of years of religious life, it seems improbable that there remains anything that has not at some time been so transfigured.¹⁴³

Consequently, myths, symbols, sacred objects, cosmologies, sacred space, sacred men, are all hierophanies with their own morphology.¹⁴⁴ Eliade elaborates on his system, that a hierophany is named only in the classification of each category of evidence. For example, each must have two elements, first the modality of the sacred through which the sacred manifests itself and second, an *historical incident* that reveals 'some attitude man has had towards the sacred'.¹⁴⁵ It is the latter element which causes the phenomenon to be defined as a hierophany because it is through the profane phenomenon that the sacred is revealed. Eliade's methods show some similarity to van der Leeuw's human-centred approach to the comprehension of religious data as well as his subjective-objective interrelationship. Equally, van der Leeuw's revelatory process is similar to Eliade's 'religious experience' identified with *homo religiosus*; the researcher or scholar experiences an ontological 'revelation' of the sacred.

The concept seems complex; the hierophanies, the religious data, not only have a long historical evolution, Eliade suggests that they have a changing morphology of the sacred.¹⁴⁶ Thus a hierophany concerns the history of what different cultures have valued as sacred. Equally, the term 'religion' does not necessarily imply 'belief in God, gods, or ghosts, but refers to the experience of the

¹⁴³ Eliade, *Patterns*, 12.

¹⁴⁴ Eliade includes also inscriptions, votive objects, rites, oral traditions as well as customs. The latter has an implication of cultural values. Eliade's inclusion of 'myths' as a hierophany raises again the problem of the definition of the term 'myth', discussed later.

¹⁴⁵ Studstill, 'Eliade, phenomenology', 178. He argues that the 'modality of the sacred' is a phenomenological expression.

¹⁴⁶ Eliade, *Patterns*, 2.

sacred, and consequently, is related to the ideas of *being, meaning and truth*'.¹⁴⁷ Thus Eliade interprets the terms 'sacred' and 'religion' within a wider cultural matrix. He broadens the phenomenological category to a less exclusive 'religious' category in the Western sense. Similarly, when he defines a hierophany as a universal category, he removes it from its earlier 'Christian religion' context. Eliade insists that there are great differences between the many hierophanies but the structure and dialectic are always the same.

An empirical appraisal of the ancient Egyptian Luxor Temple at Thebes may serve as a model for Eliade's hierophany of 'sacred space'. The historical texts of the ancient Egyptians confirm the intent of the ancient Egyptians that as human beings they valued their artefacts, rituals and texts as 'sacred'.¹⁴⁸ Given that Eliade identifies different cultures historically in the changing morphology of what cultures value as sacred, Luxor Temple illustrates a changing historical morphology of the sacred.¹⁴⁹ Further such a human-centred approach may identify what appears as a socio-cultural 'religious' or 'sacred' presence rather than a sacred space which is Christian-centred. It demonstrates historically not only what different cultures have valued as sacred but also proves some insight into East-West cultural differences.

The Luxor Temple is the sacred object and a force of power; it stands on the sacred space of what was previously, the so-called profane 'land'. Eliade names non-sacred land 'a force of nature'; the natural world he suggests is absent of any sacred associations. The 'profane' is transformed into the sacred space of the temple by the rituals and festivals dedicated to their gods by many Egyptian divine kings. A hierophany arises that varies from one culture to another in the changing morphology

¹⁴⁷ Eliade, *Quest*, 1. Van der Leeuw interprets the meaning of comprehension as 'becoming' understood, mentioned earlier, which relates in a sense to Eliade's concept of 'being'.

¹⁴⁸ I use the term 'sacred' to mean an entity which is venerated by its community or, on behalf of its community by a hierarchy, in the sense that it is either supernatural or is held in high esteem. For example the word 'sacrifice' concerns a sacred offering. In Egypt, the sacred offering to the gods was a reciprocal gesture, 'the renunciation of something of value', for example offerings, in return for stability of the land of Egypt. In modern terms 'sacrifice' tends to indicate a 'human being's self-giving or self-abnegating commitment to God'. From the word '*sacrum*', sacred place belong to a god. Rosemary Goring, ed., *Dictionary of Beliefs and Religions*, (Herts: Wordsworth Editions, 1995), 449-451.

¹⁴⁹ On sacred space as a hierophany, see Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1959), 25-26. See also Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols*, (London: Harvill Press, 1961), 28-56 on his concept of the 'centre' and sacred space.

of the Luxor Temple. When the sacred space is no longer that of the ancient Egyptians, it becomes the sacred space of the Coptic Christians. They built their church in the sixth century CE within the temple precincts of Luxor temple. Later, in the thirteenth century construction of an Islamic mosque arose within its walls. 'This mosque still remains in use today and effectively brings the history of Luxor Temple as a sacred precinct from its beginning, some time before 1500 BCE, to the present day - a history of well over 3000 years of change, development and growth'.¹⁵⁰

Eliade offers an example the religious symbol of the Cosmic Tree which he suggests is present in the diverse cultures of Mesopotamia, India, Siberia, Central Asia and Indonesia'.¹⁵¹ Eliade's enquiry concerns the religio-historical circumstances which result in the same symbol having different meanings within different cultures in the various locations. Studstill suggests that Eliade 'proves' that 'different modalities of the sacred exist through reference to different experiences by observers of the same ritual'.¹⁵² Whether or not the Cosmic Tree held a universal sacred meaning is not the issue. It is sufficient that Eliade acknowledges the presence of human-centred cultural differences in religious symbols which he implies may have acted as problem-solving societal tools.

The hierophany 'sacred space' therefore is valued historically and culturally by different human beings while the concept of the 'sacred space' remains constant. Eliade would query why three different cultures placed importance on that particular piece of land as their 'sacred space'. I have refrained from giving the sacred space a 'religious' identity in order to maintain the integrity of each culture's uniqueness. First the temple arose historically within the culture of the ancient Egyptians, it was followed by the Christian concept of sacred space identified by their rituals and images, and finally the morphology of the Muslim community was situated in the sacred space. Given that Eliade has placed some importance on cultural differences and the historical context of religious data, my example, using Eliade's model may

¹⁵⁰ Richard H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Temples of Ancient Egypt*, (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 167.

¹⁵¹ Eliade, 'Methodological Remarks', 94-95.

¹⁵² Studstill, 'Eliade, phenomenology', 182. See also Eliade, *Patterns*, 7.

provide empirical verification of 'sacred space' as a hierophany. However, in my example there is little reference to any comprehension of the different belief systems that identify the cultural uniqueness of the Egyptians, Christians or Muslims.

2.7.2 Identification of the Issues

The Luxor Temple model identifies one of the issues which appear to fail the practical test. The meaning of Eliade's universal hierophany, 'sacred space', is understood in the given context, but it is empty of any cultural identity. For example, 'veneration' in the form of communal worship is an experience particular to the Christian Church and the Islamic Mosque. Conversely, in the Egyptian Temple rather than communal worship, a reciprocal relationship is present between the divine king and the various gods. The general populace appears to have no access to the temple proper.¹⁵³ Nonetheless agreement is present in the description of the universal hierophany, 'sacred space' as well as the universal concept of the Ideal Type of a 'sacred building'. A temple, mosque, church or any building used within the context of supernatural rituals may be defined as a universal 'sacred building'. Nonetheless, any reference to the cultural differences in the form and function of their respective sacred space is absent. In order to understand the intent of the sacred space it may be necessary for Eliade's model to be extended to include the cultural differences. Jonathan Z. Smith offers his view on the importance of differences.

Smith rightly remarks that 'comparison requires the acceptance of difference as the grounds of being interesting, and a methodological manipulation of that difference to achieve some stated cognitive end'.¹⁵⁴ He astutely questions what differences may be maintained or relaxed. Smith uses as a model Eliade's Near Eastern and Indic temple pattern; it focuses on cosmogony and the replication of the symbolism of the 'Centre'. The symbolism of the temple is summarised by Eliade in

¹⁵³ For a fuller description of the economic, political and theological function of the Egyptian temple see Kemp, *Ancient Egypt*, 92-105 and 185-207 His comment on ancient Egyptian temples, that they 'bestowed on the gods a status which corresponded to power and importance on a strictly material scale' and 'shorn of theological nuance, temples comprised a major sector of the 'state' as we would see it, working in a symbiotic relationship with the palace', 191. See also W. J. Murnane, *The Penguin Guide to Ancient Egypt*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1996), 61-66.

¹⁵⁴ Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 14.

three interrelated concepts: the "sacred mountain" where heaven and earth meet; every temple, palace, town, royal residence and the like is assimilated to a "sacred mountain"; the temple, or sacred city as the place where the Axis Mundi passes is the junction between heaven, earth and *hell*.¹⁵⁵

Here is the problem of universals. To assign the *Axis Mundi* to all temples, to suggest it is the 'junction between *heaven, earth and hell*,' is to impose a Judaic-Christian dogma absent in the beliefs of ancient Egypt. Textual and pictorial evidence in Egyptian tombs deny the concept of Eternity as a place of suffering 'in hell'; the ancient Egyptians enjoyed an Afterlife as an extension of their earthy life, but any concept of torment or anguish is absent.¹⁵⁶ Similarly, scholars refer to 'heaven' as synonymous to the Egyptian sky; the latter is described in Egyptian texts and iconography as an expanse of water.¹⁵⁷ Further, kingship is associated with the Egyptian temple with rituals which link their supernatural and earthly worlds. The function of the Egyptian temple as an economical, political, and theocratic institution continued throughout Egypt's historical period. Smith's concise comment is apt: 'Common sense would suggest that there are distinctions and differences here that cannot be so readily relaxed'.¹⁵⁸ Acknowledgements of differences therefore may be the catalyst towards understanding cultures that appear foreign to us. The convergence of similarities may inflict a cultural strait-jacket on differences, thus denying the identity of diverse cultures.

Distinctions and differences are seen also in the concept of 'religion'. When Eliade defines religion as the 'experience of the sacred' or 'man's response to the sacred', Flood suggests that Eliade's definition of religion leans towards *presuppositions* about religion. Oddly, Flood chooses not to use Eliade's term

¹⁵⁵ Smith, *To Take Place*, 14. For references to the *Axis Mundi* see Eliade, *Patterns*, 99-100, 111, 227-228. For the *Axis Mundi* and the Cosmic Tree in association with 'Heaven, Earth, and Hell' see Eliade, 'Methodological Remarks', 93.

¹⁵⁶ The Egyptian Afterlife is discussed in detail in chapters three, five and six.

¹⁵⁷ The Egyptian sky is discussed in detail in chapter three with textual evidence from the Pyramid Texts

¹⁵⁸ Smith, *To Take Place*, 14. Smith's remarks are directed to the model of the Axis Mundi as the symbolic Centre, and the Tjilpa, who do not have such an ideological building.

'hierophany' for the sacred. Instead he replaces it with the word 'theophany'.¹⁵⁹ There is some difference between Eliade's 'hierophany' relating to the sacred and Flood's god-oriented 'theophany', the disparity unintentionally proving his earlier point on presuppositions. That is, in slanting Eliade's concept of 'religion' from the sacred to a theological bias, does Flood impose the latter on Eliade's meaning?

Much of the confusion may result from Eliade's paradoxical 'sacred'¹⁶⁰ hierophany of religion and his non-theological concept mentioned earlier, that religion is 'not necessarily a belief in God, gods, or ghosts'.¹⁶¹ He grades hierophanies from the most elementary hierophany for example, the manifestation of the sacred in a stone, and ending in 'the supreme hierophany, the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ'.¹⁶² None of this is to deny the existence of Eliade's term 'theophany' which he translates as a deity that is manifest in a hierophany.¹⁶³ Nevertheless, Flood made his point:

Eliade's idea of theophany, [sic] the manifestation of the sacred, has structured his research findings and is based on a pre-understanding or presupposition of religion as theophany... The definition and the explanation of religion are interdependent and different answers will be produced by different research programmes.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ See *The Chambers Dictionary*, 1993, 1794. For 'theophany': Gr: *theophaneia* a vision of god, exhibition of gods' statues, from *phainein* to show. See also Eliade, *Encyclopedia*, 313. For 'hierophany': Gr: from *hieros* sacred, and *phainein* to show, Eliade does not include the presence of God or gods in all religions.

¹⁶⁰ Studstill, 'Eliade, phenomenology', 181. He argues that, 'the sacred' is a cover term for that category of 'objects' constituted in the mind of the believer as both 'ultimately real' and as distinct from the profane world'.

¹⁶¹ Eliade, *Quest*, 1. See also Mircea Eliade, *Myths, Dream and Mysteries*, (London: Collins, 1968), 130. Eliade refers to the Melanesians who 'implicitly acknowledge several modalities of the sacred - gods, spirits, ghosts, etc.' Ascribing the power of *mana* as the sacred, Eliade concluded that the religious life of the Melanesians is not confined to belief in the *mana* conferred by gods or spirits.

¹⁶² Eliade, *Myths, Dreams*, 124. This is similar to the phenomenologist's form of grading when a measure of similarity only is required of the religious data. The family resemblance may be distant or close, slight or pronounced.

¹⁶³ See Eliade, *Encyclopedia*, 315. When a hierophany manifests the presence of a divinity then that hierophany becomes a theophany. For example, because the Egyptian sun god Re, a force of Power, is manifest in the sun which is a force of nature, Eliade names this as a theophany, a divinity within a hierophany.

¹⁶⁴ Flood, *Phenomenology*, 65.

A similar association with 'religion' links the meaning of *homo religiosus* with 'hierophany', 'sacred' and 'manifestation'. In van der Leeuw's revelation of 'what appears', *homo religiosus* is a manifestation of Christianity. In Eliade's *homo religiosus* there is implied a general religiousness in which all civilisations whether Christian, Muslim, Greek or Egyptian, participate in a universal religious identity. Can the term 'religion' be so re-defined? In Eliade's new inclusive hermeneutic approach to phenomenology, he argues that his systematic study reveals much of humanity's religious history. Eliade concludes that 'this history of religious meanings must always be regarded as forming part of the history of the human spirit'.¹⁶⁵

Here is Eliade's vision of *homo religiosus*, the archetype of the 'sacred' history of humanity, and affirmation of Dudley's view of Eliade as the anti-historian of religions.¹⁶⁶ Eliade follows the religious experience of Kristensen and van der Leeuw: 'For *homo religiosus* the essential precedes existence. This is as true of the man of "primitive" and Oriental societies as it is of the Jew, the Christian, and the Muslim. Man is what he is today because a series of events took place in *ab origine*'.¹⁶⁷ Following the premise of Kristensen the question arises of whether or not the ancient Egyptians would validate Eliade's claim. For Eliade history is no longer human-centred but religion-centred.

Eliade has received some adverse criticisms. He is described as a phenomenologist who systemises religious phenomena while simultaneously acting as a historian of religions who analyses the historical facts as well as acting as a *hermeneutist*. But history to Eliade is 'sacred' history. His new approach has brought fierce criticism from Ivan Strenski.

Eliade means to fling open the door to wider speculation in the study of religion. 'Creative hermeneutics' is unabashedly 'speculative

¹⁶⁵ Eliade, *Quest*, 9.

¹⁶⁶ See Dudley, *Religion on Trial*, 29. Dudley comments that anyone who knows Eliade's work will recognise his theme of escaping historical time which is evident in his books on religion; a characteristic of *homo religiosus*. See also Dudley, 'Mircea Eliade as "Anti-Historian"', 345-359.

¹⁶⁷ Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 92.

hermeneutics'. What else could explain Eliade's disrespect for empirical and historical criteria of confirmation and falsification?¹⁶⁸

In Eliade's methodology, the historian of religion 'must trace not only the *history* of a given hierophany, but first of all understand and *explain* the modality of the sacred that that hierophany discloses'.¹⁶⁹ Yet paradoxically the scholar must 'transcend history' while tracing the history of a hierophany. Flood challenges the hierophany theory from a cultural materialist prospective. The latter, he argues is 'based on an implicit theological and ahistorical understanding of religion; an understanding that sees religion as transcending history'.¹⁷⁰

Thus, the terms, 'religion' and 'sacred', at the core of Eliade's classification of a hierophany come under scholarly criticism.¹⁷¹ Flood challenges not only Eliade's theory of hierophanies but also religious data as the premise in the classification of categories of religion *because* 'religious data are transparent as religious'. Flood continues: 'But this is to beg questions about the nature of these 'religious data' but also about the nature of the inquiry that is taking place'.¹⁷² His point is succinct and from the perspective of Egyptian civilisation, an observation of some worth; that *religion* should not be separated from its socio-political framework. Rather 'religion' should be seen as part of an integrated society. The problem returns to the meaning of the universal term 'religion' and its subsequent influence on the taxon 'myth' as a typology of religion.

Flood appears to confirm the issue this chapter seeks to demonstrate, the need for a socio-cultural perspective in phenomenological categories of religion. Referring to Eliade's hierophany 'myth', Flood expresses his concern that 'the work of Eliade has argued for the archetypal nature of myth at the cost of its historical particularity'.¹⁷³ Given Eliade's explicit claim that every hierophany we look at is

¹⁶⁸ Eliade, *Myth*, 120.

¹⁶⁹ Eliade, *Myths, Dreams*, 5.

¹⁷⁰ Flood, *Phenomenology*, 5.

¹⁷¹ See Dudley, *Religion on Trial*, 37-42 and his attacks on Eliade's methodology.

¹⁷² Flood, *Phenomenology*, 4.

¹⁷³ Flood, *Phenomenology*, 123.

also an historical fact,¹⁷⁴ I understand his comment to mean that the lens of history is the profane window through which the hierophany is recognised by *homo religiosus*. Flood is rightly concerned that to phenomenologists like Eliade 'religion is a category that stands outside of history and socio-political structures, and is presented as a *sui generis* phenomenon, beyond other social and historical concerns'.¹⁷⁵ Given Eliade's concept not only of *homo religiosus* as the universal human condition but also his ahistorical approach to religion, should 'myth' be classified as a 'hierophany' within the same context?

2.7.3 Myth: 'Hierophany' of Religion

Eliade without doubt is a scholar whose prolific writing has resulted in an abundance of books that discuss and offer an array of diverse approaches to the subject of myth. He poses the question, 'What exactly is a myth?'¹⁷⁶ His response is a plenitude of definitions suggesting either an unanswerable question or an indeterminate term. A few of his descriptions serve to highlight the uncertainty of some definitions, although he admits with some astuteness that it would be 'hard to find a definition of myth acceptable to all scholars and at the same time intelligible to non-specialists'.¹⁷⁷ This selection discerns some aspects of Eliade's meaning of the term 'myth'

According to Eliade, myth is a hierophany, it is a sacred story, and hence a "true history" because it always deals with realities.¹⁷⁸ In this context most cultures would consider their sacred stories as true events in their history. Paradoxically, a hierophany, a manifestation of the sacred, is recognised by *homo religiosus* only through mundane history which in itself is synonymous with the profane. What is recognised by *homo religiosus* is 'sacred history'. Myth relates a sacred history; it relates an event that took place in primordial Time, the fabled time of the

¹⁷⁴ Eliade, *Myths, Dreams*, 2.

¹⁷⁵ Flood, *Phenomenology*, 6. See also Dudley, 'Mircea Eliade "Anti-Historian"', 345-359.

¹⁷⁶ Eliade, *Quest*, 23.

¹⁷⁷ Eliade, *Quest*, 5.

¹⁷⁸ Eliade, *Myth*, 6.

"beginnings". Myth is identical with 'fabled time', 'true history' and 'being'. Paradoxically, I offer that Eliade implies that the history of the world is non-religious, non-being and following the binary concept, it is not true. Existence of 'being' therefore means 'spiritual existence'.

Eliade offers more interpretations. Myth tells how, through the deeds of Supernatural Beings, a reality came into existence, whether the whole of reality, the Cosmos, or only a fragment of reality - an island, a species of plant, a particular kind of human behaviour, an institution. Myth is always an account of creation.¹⁷⁹ Myth is an extremely complex cultural reality, which can be approached and interpreted from various and complimentary viewpoints.¹⁸⁰ Because origin myths relate to the beginning of human existence, humans are mortal beings because of the *events* that happened before history began, *in illo tempore*. 'If the World *exists*, if man *exists*, it is because Supernatural Beings exercised Creative powers in the "beginning."¹⁸¹ Consequently, sacred history is mythical time and the actors in the drama of myths are Supernatural Beings. In the repetition and re-enactment of the myths, Eliade suggests, not only is the event repeated but also the secret of the origin of things is learned.

In summary, from these definitions, it is clear that Eliade's intention is to explain myth as a sacred or religious narrative, one that is true to the believer of a particular culture; myth conveys their reality, as they see it. Some 'myths' certainly concern the creation of the world and humankind by a Supernatural Being; the 'sacredness' may constitute a dimension of something other than itself.¹⁸² The 'other' is a quality of supernatural proportions, which according to Eliade signifies the 'religiousness' of the myth. Similarly, sacred history is encapsulated in the notion of the *homo religiosus*, the archetype of the 'religious experience' of humankind,

¹⁷⁹ Eliade, *Myth*, 5-6.

¹⁸⁰ Eliade, *Myth*, 5.

¹⁸¹ Eliade, *Myth*, 11.

¹⁸² There are many myths of creation in ancient Egypt which refer to political rebirths and new beginnings; they will be discussed later.

discussed earlier. Eliade's definitions of myth indicate clearly a sacredness that is ahistorical.

Eliade's sacred history is 'mythology'. It 'lays the foundation for all human behaviour and all social and cultural institutions'. Nevertheless, it is problematic when he aligns these institutions with 'the "*fact*" that man was created and civilised by Supernatural Beings. It follows that the sum of his behaviour and activities belong to sacred history.¹⁸³ Flood recognizes similar problems when Eliade follows Kristensen and van der Leeuw's ahistorical nature of 'myth' as a typology of religion at the cost of its historical particularity. He argues that the 'particularity and temporal dimension is diminished in the phenomenology of religion's emphasis on ahistorical universals and patterns'.¹⁸⁴ The relationship between the terms 'myth' and 'religion' is thus increasingly estranged. That Eliade joins with Kristensen and van der Leeuw and concedes the ahistorical religiousness of human beings as *homo religiosus* and by association the universal nature of the 'essence' of religion, as I understand the issue, defines the kernel of the problem.

2.8 Summary

Given that I have responded throughout the chapter to the issues, I answer briefly the questions in the introduction. How has 'myth' been defined as a classification or typology? What are the consequences to the meaning of the term 'myth' when classified as a typology of 'religion'? On the formation of categories of religion, the three phenomenologists systemised the various forms of empirical data. Then, after separating the religious and non-religious data, they classified the religious phenomena into groups of similar types. The three concepts involved in the classifying process, the 'essence' of religion, and the ahistorical nature of the religious data, clearly signify the defining quality of the typology of myth as exclusively religious.

The taxon 'myth' was classified variously as a category, an Ideal Type or a hierophany of religion. Each phenomenologist offered different methods, which in

¹⁸³ Eliade, preface to *Rites*, xi.

¹⁸⁴ Flood, *Phenomenology*, 123.

the end appeared variations of the same theme in that the term 'myth' was classified with the ahistorical nature of a universal religion-centred typology. The latter denied any cultural or human-centred identity of 'myth' as a story of the beliefs or ideology of a community. Consequently, there was little evidence of any socio-cultural differences observed in the 'myths' discussed by the phenomenologists, although I indicated differences from an Egyptian perspective.

Although Eliade suggested a human-centred cultural context to myth, the reality was otherwise. In his ahistorical definition of the sacredness of 'myth' as a hierophany, Eliade proposed as a fact that the existence of all civilised human beings was the result of a Superhuman creator. Both Kristensen and van der Leeuw also agreed on the ahistorical nature of 'myth' at the cost of its historical particularity. The ahistorical nature of the religion-myth partnership suggested presuppositions on the nature of the baggage carried by the construct term religion, which subsequently was passed over to the term 'myth'.

As a typology of religion, Eliade defines sacred stories as 'myth' on the whole as origin-myths, although chapters four and five demonstrate that in this context, Egyptian 'myths' may exist only in part. Kristensen and van der Leeuw proposed that the common element present in 'myth', a *hieros logos* or a sacred story, centred on Christian doctrines. Although both agreed that 'myth' was a typology of religion, they denied that their sacred story was 'myth'. As a result, both phenomenologists demonstrated a bi-polar, true-false dichotomy of the term 'myth' where a subjective insider description of my 'sacred story' or *hieros logos* is true. Conversely, an outsider, objective view describes the sacred texts of an 'other' or 'alien' belief system as 'false'; 'your sacred story is 'myth', it is false'. I posit that Kristensen and van der Leeuw invalidate the taxonomy 'myth' as a universal category of religion. The consequences therefore to the meaning of the term 'myth', when classified as a typology of 'religion', are significant and justify my further research in chapter four.

What is the meaning intended by the three classical phenomenologists of the 'essence' of religion? Kristensen and van der Leeuw identify the common element of comparison, the 'essence' of religion, with their own Christian beliefs. The

difference between Eliade's hierophany as a manifestation of the sacred and van der Leeuw's revelation of 'what appears' is one of degree. Generally, the sacred element is manifest to Eliade through the universal nature of *homo religiosus*, although there are hints to a Christian overlay, the concept of the *Axis Mundi* of heaven, earth and hell was an example. For Kristensen, the defining factor of the religious 'essence' was the Spirit or intuition, for van der Leeuw 'what appears' was revealed by God. A comparison of Kristensen's concept of 'kingship' and van der Leeuw's Christian 'salvation' with the Egyptian beliefs revealed an overlay of Christianity that distorted the beliefs of the Egyptian. The consequences of a similar overlay of the Greek culture over the Egyptian deities, is examined in chapter three.

Thus adherents may be unable to validate realistically the scholar's interpretation of their beliefs, if the universal element of similarity is the 'essence' of, either the construct term 'religion' with its baggage of the West, or Christianity. Kristensen explained, as *homo religiosus*, 'We should never be able to describe the essence of religion if we did not know from our own experience what religion is'.¹⁸⁵

Although my aim in this chapter was to identify the phenomenological issues, my intention was also to pursue the positive aspects of the phenomenological method, particular the principles of *epoché* and empathy. Although it may be improbable for the phenomenologist to bracket all religious beliefs, opinions, biases and the like, the aim of the phenomenologist of religion is an undertaking to comprehend the beliefs of others. First, van der Leeuw argues for the subjective-objective interrelationship between the phenomenologist and the data. I discuss this more fully in chapter five. Suffice to say that van der Leeuw seeks as the final task of the phenomenologist, empirical verification of the text or artefact, 'perpetual correction by the most conscientious philological and archaeological research'.¹⁸⁶ Kristensen's contribution of the autonomy not only of the data but also of the adherent's beliefs is a phenomenological premise of substance. Both Kristensen and van der Leeuw displayed some tension in their dual role as a phenomenologist and a theologian.

¹⁸⁵ Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 10.

Equally, Eliade has to some extent broadened and reinterpreted the comparative process of the phenomenological method to include a less Western orientated concept of religion. One of the problems I found in my research of the myriad of books written by Eliade was his frequent references to a cultural approach to religion. Later, I discovered that his concept of culture was ahistorical; he demonstrated a sacred approach to religion. Nonetheless the challenge is indicative of the problem of interpretation given Eliade's prolific writing over a period of time. Similarly, his insistence on the historical nature of 'myth' fails occasionally to signify clearly that his intent is 'sacred history', a very different concept.

Finally, the issues identified in this chapter relate essentially to the exclusive religion-centred aspect of myth. A religion-theology issue may be identified. If the study of religion is a scientific discipline in that the empirical data of religion is analysed and may be subjected to the rigors of scientific proof. Equally, if the study of theology is the understanding of faith, is there a confusion of definition given that the religion described in this chapter appears to be more theological than religious?

The issues may be qualified if the phenomenological method, after grouping empirical data into similarities, is extended. General similarities, for example, of kingship can be separated further. Each type of kingship may be examined (Egyptian, Sumerian, Babylonian, and Greek); a systematic analysis of particular characteristics of each type of kingship will be used to identify each culture. The advantage to the phenomenology of religion is that the systemic method of phenomenology will provide a positive partnership with the cultural reality of a religion, rather than relying on the exclusivity of the term religion. If 'religion' as a socio-cultural function is described in historical, empirical terms, then the identity and beliefs in the diverse forms of the different cultures is respected. The Case Study in Chapter six offers a demonstration of the phenomenological methodology of Egyptian 'myth' narratives.

¹⁸⁶ Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 677.

Chapter Three

Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride*: 'Myth' Re-visited

Give your ears and hear what is said,
Give your mind over to their interpretations.¹

3.1 Introduction

In chapter two, I considered, with discussion of Gerardus van der Leeuw, whether it was a realistic endeavour for the phenomenologist of religion to exercise *epoché*, in order to understand the beliefs of others. Van der Leeuw *theorised* that if the phenomenologist adopts *epoché*, 'intellectual suspense' or 'a restraint from judgement' the result was that extraneous data failed to pervade the phenomena. I considered also van der Leeuw's *practical* application of *epoché*. Rather than 'a restraint from judgement', he allowed his Christian beliefs to penetrate his 'intellectual suspense'. Consequently, not only was Christianity the defining element in the 'essence' of religion, the Christian doctrine of salvation was the defining element in the taxon 'myth'.²

Nonetheless, van der Leeuw defended what appeared as his difficulty in the practical application of *epoché*. The phenomenologist, he offered, has little choice other than to start and end through the mirror image of his own 'religion', whether Buddhist, Muslim or Christian.³ Van der Leeuw as a scholar is aware of the practical difficulties of the phenomenological principle of *epoché*, yet he is unable to bracket his Christian beliefs. Flood suggested that van der Leeuw's intent is concerned with 'bracketing of what lies behind appearances, not with the bracketing of subjectivity'.⁴

As I understand van der Leeuw's comment, he seeks to bracket the 'reality' of the phenomena, what lies behind appearances as Flood suggests, so that 'what appears' to van der Leeuw is his own subjectivity. His subjectivity, I posit, recognizes 'what appears' to him as the 'mirror-image' of his own Christian beliefs.

¹ From the 'Instructions of Amenemope', 3:10, in Miriam Lichtheim, *AEL*, Vol.2:146-163, (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1980).

² The phenomenological model of van der Leeuw has been discussed in chapters one and two, and will be discussed further in chapter five.

³ See chapter two, n.96.

⁴ Flood, *Phenomenology*, 98. For an overview of his view on phenomenology, see 96-99.

Alternatively, Flood may consider that van der Leeuw's intention is to link *epoché* with subjectivity, that van der Leeuw identifies the human-centred *homo religiosus* with 'what appears' or is manifest to him from the religious data under scrutiny. Notwithstanding these comments, the literature examined in chapter two clearly demonstrated the difficulties experienced by van der Leeuw and Kristensen in the practical application of *epoché*. The result was that the baggage of extraneous data not only pervaded the phenomena but also predisposed the 'religious' intent of the term 'myth'.

In consideration of these comments, this chapter demonstrates a similar pattern exemplified in Plutarch's version of Isis and Osiris when the Greek historian allowed extraneous data to pervade the Egyptian so-called 'myth' of Osiris and Isis. Rather than adding to the myriad of theories that offer definitions of what is and what is not 'myth', my aim in this chapter is to bring into sharper focus the fundamental issue.⁵ Plutarch appeared to identify Egyptian deities with mirror characteristics of his own Greek deities.⁶ Whether or not Plutarch's subjective approach was the result of his identification with his Greek cultural or religious ideology, his version of the co-called Egyptian 'myth' of Isis and Osiris appeared as a distortion of the Egyptian perspective. Consideration is given to van der Leeuw's comment that a scholar has little choice other than to start and end with the mirror image of his own subjective view. Similarly, Plutarch also carried an overlay of extraneous data in his account of the Egyptian 'myth'.

Gwyn Griffiths offered a re-appraisal of the Plutarch version in his seminal work, *Plutarch's De Iside et Osiride*. Not only did Griffiths draw attention to the various misapprehensions posited by Plutarch concerning ancient Egypt's concept of their divinities, he also identified Plutarch's misconception of Egyptian kingship. A more serious consequence has resulted from the account of Plutarch's version of Isis and Osiris in its frequent repetition in current literature on ancient Egypt. Equally serious is that the Plutarch version is frequently referred to as the extant version of the Egyptian 'myth'.⁷ Literature concerning the taxon 'myth', therefore, may inform,

⁵ Chapter four re-examines the term myth in detail and offers interpretations of the term 'myth'.

⁶ The importance of a phenomenological, subjective-objective inter-relationship is discussed in chapter five.

⁷ Various authors who quote Plutarch's version of the so-called 'myth' of Isis and Osiris are discussed later.

interpret or distort the religious or cultural reality of a community. Equally, the term 'myth' may carry the excess baggage the various interpretations impose; the notion of 'falseness' is one example, the imposition of extraneous data is another.

The phenomenological method suggests that to understand another culture, subjectivity is a necessary criterion. Equally important is an objective approach, one that allows the phenomenologist to describe the insider viewpoint, to bracket his own theories and opinions so that the description 'experienced' may be verified by the insider.⁸ With some awareness of the difficulties proposed by both Kristensen, van der Leeuw and to some extent Bleeker in following this method, if understanding of the Egyptian texts is the goal, the criterion must be a subjective approach after first collating the empirical data. Only after 'experiencing' the meaning and context of the texts *as if* from the inside Egyptian viewpoint is an objective description of the texts realised. If I am not seeking a common 'essence' of religion within the Plutarch or the Egyptian version, then the result will be a determined focus on the texts themselves. My intention is to demonstrate that the reality of the Egyptian 'stories about their gods' was functionally very different to that of the Greeks. Given there is some silence in current literature of a positive response to Griffiths' appraisal of the Plutarch account of Isis and Osiris, it is appropriate that I offer another re-evaluation.

This section continues first with a brief overview of Gwyn Griffiths' *Plutarch's De Iside et Osiride*, a critique on the misrepresentation of the Egyptian view. It is followed by an evaluation of Plutarch's Greek version, interspersed with various references to literature and critiques from scholars in the field. The chapter continues with a comparison of the Egyptian roles of Isis and Osiris. My primary source is the Old Kingdom Pyramid Texts which, I propose, identifies certain royal rituals from the Egyptian insider view. Given that Plutarch described Osiris as an earthly king of Egypt, it is important that the nature and function of Egyptian kingship is realised. The Pyramid Texts therefore are an appropriate source of research because they describe the dual Power held by the Egyptian king, a Power which gave him access to both the earthly and the superhuman worlds. One Text confirms the dual superhuman-earthly authority of the king: '...[Y]our foot will not be obstructed in the sky, you will not be opposed on earth' (Pyr.622-3). Another

⁸ Three of the early key phenomenologists, Kristensen, van der Leeuw and Bleeker argue that comprehension of religious phenomena should be understood first from the insider view.

denies the king an earthly existence; his choice is to reside in the sky: 'I am not for the earth, I am for the sky' (Pyr. 890).

Not only are the Pyramid Texts considered the oldest and least corrupt texts of ancient Egypt, they are often quoted as one of the sources of Plutarch's version of Isis and Osiris. I intend also to introduce iconography and discussion of certain complex motifs of ancient Egyptian kingship to illustrate the close inter-relationship between their earthly and superhuman worlds. Mainly, I seek to demonstrate the scale of Power held by the Egyptian office of kingship. Throughout this chapter my aim is to identify any similarities and differences between the Greek and the Egyptian views, the results may provide a more profound understanding of the ancient Egyptian concept of kingship and exemplify van der Leeuw's phenomenology of subjectivity.

3.2 Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride*: An Overview

Griffiths' appraisal of *Plutarch's Isis and Osiris*⁹ is of importance to this thesis because it is similar to the type of issue discussed earlier. The classical phenomenologists' overlay of Christian theology on other religions is similar to the Greek overlay of Plutarch's version of Isis and Osiris. Whether or not the perspective is from a religious or cultural viewpoint, or both, Plutarch offers a misrepresentation of the Egyptian concept of divine kingship. Equally, he identifies not only aspects of the Greek goddess Demeter with that of the Egyptian goddess Isis, he also describes Isis and Osiris as an actual king and queen of Egypt. Although Plutarch's interpretation of Isis forms part of this section, some reference to the overall presentation of his work is necessary, if only to emphasise the difficulty of a subjective approach to the study of another culture. Griffiths' comment serves to highlight this issue:

[T]he question arises whether in fact his [Plutarch's] study of the Egyptian gods is not more marked by a desire to explain their nature and myths in Hellenic terms than to record the native explanations and

⁹ The date and place of the composition of Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride* is given as c.120 CE and either part or all is thought composed at Delphi, 17-18. See Plutarch's and J.G. Griffiths, *Plutarch's De Iside et Osiride*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1970); Edited with an introduction, translation and commentary, by J.G. Griffiths.

the striking ways in which Egyptian religious thought differed from the Greek.¹⁰

This is not to say that either Griffiths or Plutarch followed a phenomenological methodology in examining the 'myth' of Isis and Osiris, although there are similarities in Griffiths' observations that link to discussions in chapter one, in that the Greeks 'saw in foreign deities their own gods under different names'.¹¹ Consideration is directed, for example, to the earlier discussion in chapter two, suggesting that the Christian Saviour motif is linked to the Egyptian god, Osiris.¹²

Similarly, the phenomenological dilemma of bracketing one's own beliefs is suggested in Griffiths' comment: 'If this attitude [adapting Egyptian theology to the Platonic philosophy] seems, nevertheless, to be unduly subjective ... one should reflect how rare it is for the fervent religious mind to practice a tolerant and sympathetic observation of other religions'.¹³ When Griffiths examined Plutarch's exposition of the so-called Osirian 'myth', he noted not only an absence of objectivity but also that Plutarch's subjectivity described a distortion of Egyptian values. Nonetheless, Griffiths, a classicist, historian, and an Egyptologist, observed like van der Leeuw, that a scholar's propensity to be overly subjective depends on the strength of the beliefs whether religious or otherwise, of the scholar.¹⁴ Given that the views of both Griffiths and van der Leeuw coincide, I suggest that the scholarly unity of thought results from a human-centred rather than a religious experience.

[Plutarch's] descriptive distinctions and psychological analyses [of the Osirian myth] are coloured by his [Plutarch's] own thinking and that

¹⁰ Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 31.

¹¹ Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 19. Griffiths is quoting from H. J. Rose, *The Roman Questions of Plutarch* (Oxford 1924), 53. See Griffiths' comments: 'As early as Herodotus the Greeks assumed that the gods of the Egyptians, like those of other nations, could be equated with their own'. 257. See also Griffiths' comment that in general, Herodotus 'believed that Egypt was the source of Greek religion'. He suggests that Herodotus 'probably means here that the Greek names were modelled on Egyptian prototypes, conveying a similar meaning in another language', 53,n.2. The 'naming' process and the inter-relationship between gods and goddesses are particularly important in Egypt – I discuss this in detail in chapters five and six.

¹² For van der Leeuw's theory of a universal typology of 'salvation', see previous chapter two.

¹³ Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 32. Griffiths' comment seems to verify the difficulty for the 'fervent religious mind' to be subjective about another religion. The theological background of the classical phenomenologists would suggest some support for this theory.

¹⁴ See Book Review: R.E. Witt, 'Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride*', *The Classical Review*, 22, 1972:207-209. Griffiths is described as an 'expert Egyptologist' by the reviewer, R.E. Witt.

of the cultured society whom he addresses. To some extent ... the difference depends on the religious beliefs, or absence of such beliefs, characteristic of the observer' but his [Plutarch's] strongly held philosophical views made it unlikely that he would strive hard to understand ideas that were very different.¹⁵

That Griffiths suggested that Plutarch's analysis of Egyptian myth was coloured by his socio-cultural background, may be indicative of 'myths' themselves, as I propose, that in some form they are reflections of the cultural identity of their creators, of which religion may form an integral part. Similarly, he suggested that this seems in accord with the difficulties earlier discussed of bracketing one's own beliefs in order to better understand the beliefs of others. Plutarch's approach to Egyptian 'religion' is summarised by Griffiths: 'His belief in a rational approach to mythology helped to give him the faculty of treating the myths of other peoples in the same spirit as he did those of the Greeks'.¹⁶ An alternative view is expressed by Sir Alan Gardiner when he introduced his translation of the ancient Egyptian text, *The Eloquent Peasant*: 'The only basis we have for preferring one rendering to another... is an intuitive appreciation of the trend of the ancient writer's mind'.¹⁷ The phenomenological dichotomy of reason or intuition, or a subjective-objective combination, is seen in both views.

This is not to say that the methodology of the phenomenologist is unattainable, given Kristensen's view that it is more a probability than a certainty. Rather it is important to emphasise that students of religion should be aware of the possible intrusion of their own religious or cultural beliefs, or absence of such beliefs, in the religion or culture being researched.¹⁸ Griffiths voiced the dilemma: 'Can it be that, if Herodotus was pro-Egyptian, Plutarch was, in spite of his professed universalism, a somewhat narrow Greek exclusivist, eager to press the Hellenic

¹⁵ Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 32. See also van der Leeuw's comment in chapter two, n.98.

¹⁶ Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 19. See also the preface in R.O. Faulkner, *Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), viii. Faulkner's comment is particularly important to this study: 'Without doubt many of the divergences between Sethe's translations [of the Pyramid Texts] and my own arise from just this necessity of personal interpretation, and it is well that differences of opinion should be ventilated, so that other workers in the field may be made aware of the possibilities and perhaps be enabled to decide between them'.

¹⁷ Alan H. Gardiner, 'The Eloquent Peasant', *JEA*, 9, 1923:5-25.

¹⁸ The difficulties experienced by the classical phenomenologists in the intrusion of their Christian beliefs, was discussed in chapter two.

stamp on whatever he saw in other religions?’¹⁹ Although Griffiths acknowledged the genuineness of Plutarch’s interpretation of the Isis and Osiris myth, in that he ‘narrates the details of the myth... as accurately and faithfully as he is able’, in the final analysis, Griffiths suggested that ‘an objective appraisal [of the Osiris ‘myth’] is impossible’.²⁰ Henri Frankfort interpreted Plutarch differently.

Even Plutarch, who was well informed, has hellenized Isis and Osiris so thoroughly that his book has long been a *source of confusion* to Egyptologists. There is *no authority in Pharaonic sources* for the character and some of the adventures which he attributes to these gods. Yet Plutarch does so, not because he was indifferent, but, on the contrary, because of the spell Isis and Osiris had cast over him and over his contemporaries... Thus Isis, the devoted but *subservient* consort of Osiris, became the vehicle of Plutarch’s philosophy, his peculiar amalgam of Platonic and Stoic views...²¹ (my emphasis)

Here is an example of the confusion of literature. Frankfort argued above that Plutarch’s version of the ‘myth’ of Isis and Osiris is a ‘source of confusion to Egyptologists’. Different interpretations may add to the distraction of attempting to understand a culture’s narrative from the insider view. Of some significance is that both Griffiths and Frankfort implied that it was unrealistic to presume a scholar’s ability to bracket cultural ideals. It is important, therefore, that a comparative appraisal of Plutarch’s *De Iside et Osiride* is offered, if only to establish any deviation or otherwise from ancient Egyptian textual sources. Equally, comments from Egyptologists whether or not they support Plutarch’s version are included. It is not my intention to elaborate on Egyptian theology in general. Rather my aim is to exemplify the issues surrounding the typology ‘myth’. If the term ‘myth’ is a narrative that concerns superhuman beings, and the Pyramid Texts are understood to include the ‘myth of Isis and Osiris’ and other deities, then are the Pyramid Texts exemplified as ‘myths’ of ancient Egypt?

3.3 Plutarch’s *De Iside et Osiride*: an Evaluation

Within the eighty chapters of Plutarch’s *De Iside et Osiride*, only chapters twelve to nineteen will be researched in this study because, as Griffiths noted, *only*

¹⁹ Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 31.

²⁰ Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 32.

²¹ Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 31. Quoted by Griffiths from Henri Frankfort’s, *The Problem of Similarity in Ancient Near Eastern Religions*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), 22.

these chapters 'are constantly credited by Egyptologists as providing a trustworthy narrative of the myth of Osiris'. He explained: 'Works on Egyptian religion *freely use Plutarch's account*, one reason being that Egyptian sources, in spite of an increasing plethora of allusions, do not provide a narrative which is at once comprehensive and coherent'²² (my emphasis). The question is, whether or not allusions to the beliefs of another culture are justified as facts, when Egyptian narratives are silent on the subject of reliable evidence to validate Plutarch's claims. Recent literature continues to offer Plutarch's version as the authoritative account often with the proviso, for example, that the 'myth of Osiris or the strands of myth that gather around him, are mostly preserved as short allusions'.²³ The problem is perpetuated when Plutarch's account is reiterated with the implication that allusions to facts constitute the reality envisaged by the Egyptians.

Some three decades earlier the historian and phenomenologist, C. J. Bleeker, agreed: 'The myth of Osiris was made famous by Plutarch's rendering of it. Only scattered allusions to the mythical adventures of Osiris are to be found in the Egyptian texts'.²⁴ Although there is agreement among scholars that Plutarch's version of the Osiris 'myth' fails to provide an accurate account of ancient Egyptian beliefs, reference is often made to the 'death' or the 'death and resurrection' of Osiris as if he had been an earthly king.²⁵ This fact in itself appears to challenge aspects of

²² Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 1-2. See also Henri Frankfort, *Ancient Egyptian Religion*, (New York; London: Harper & Row, 1961), 126. Frankfort attests that the Osiris, Isis and Horus myth was not only popular among the Egyptians; it is referred to in the Pyramid Texts and the Memphite Theology. He comments: 'Yet it is not known as a connected story until Plutarch recorded it'. See also Frankfort, *Kingship*, 292. 'The Greeks have not only identified Egyptian gods with their own but have used the Egyptian material creatively for their own ends. The spread of the cult of Isis throughout the Roman Empire is the outstanding example of an adaptation in which the original features disappeared almost completely. Most, if not all, of the information on Egyptian religion which classical authors offer is disfigured from the Egyptian point of view'.

²³ Barry Kemp, *BD*, 25. Kemp continued, 'For full versions of the Osiris myth we have to wait until near the end of Egyptian civilisation, when Greek and Roman authors encountered Egypt as travellers or residents. The most detailed account is written by an ancient Greek scholar-priest, Plutarch, around AD 100'.

²⁴ C.J. Bleeker, *Hathor and Thoth*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973), 2. Bleeker does not source his observations on Griffiths' account of Plutarch's version of Isis and Osiris rather his Bibliography cites Plutarch's original Greek account, 165. It is commendable to Bleeker as a scholar and a phenomenologist that he had observed independently that Plutarch's version deviated considerably from Egyptian sources.

²⁵ See Pinch, *Egyptian Myth*, 'The murder of Osiris', 114; A.G. McDowell, *Village Life in Ancient Egypt*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 118. McDowell states: 'The great myth of Osiris is best known from the account by Plutarch, a Greek'. She described also the 'death and resurrection' of Osiris. See also Brief Communication by Alan Gardiner, 'Was Osiris an Ancient King Subsequently

the 'myth', that the 'murder' of Osiris was committed by either Horus, his son, or Seth, his brother.²⁶ If the prerogative of the phenomenological method is to understand another culture from the insider view, then to understand ancient Egypt is to realise that the office of kingship existed centre-stage in their society. And the office of kingship in Egypt was the Osiris-Horus alliance of kings. It is necessary, therefore, that Egyptian sources are re-examined, but first, the Plutarch account.

3.4 Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride*: Chapters Twelve to Twenty

Griffiths cited the sources of Plutarch's work as largely originating from classical Greek literature. Authors such as Homer, Plato, Hesiod, Aristotle and 'the Pythagoreans', are referred to in a general way. Griffiths explained: 'That Plutarch used compilations of material is suggested by the large number of authors whom he cites. That he used more than one compilation of authors is shown by the discrepancies between significant statements which seem to be finally approved'.²⁷ The consequence therefore is not only a decided Greek overlay but also what appears as an indiscriminate use of literary sources.

Griffiths observed that in chapters twelve to twenty in Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride*, 'not a single author is named'.²⁸ Although Plutarch mostly quoted his Egyptian sources in general terms, for example, 'the priests say', 'the Egyptians relate', more intangible sources are cited, such as, 'they say', 'some aver', 'some say', and 'it is said'. Griffiths rightly asked of the Egyptian content: 'Greek philosophical doctrines have obviously coloured many of the interpretations, but it may constantly be asked whether a sub-stratum of Egyptian teaching is present'. He

Deified?', *JEA*, 46, 1960:104. Gardiner vehemently repudiates holding the view that Osiris was an earthly king. He asks the scholars who have misquoted him to refer to his paper written in 1916, the opinions voiced then remain the same. That 'it is improbable' that Osiris was an earthly king, and that he [Gardiner] would describe him [Osiris] as 'a personification of dead kingship'.

²⁶ It is important to stress that my thesis concerns the issues that result from the term 'myth' as a typology of 'religion' in ancient Egypt rather than detailed accounts of all Egyptian 'myths'. The Pyramid Texts in particular may give obscure references to aspects of 'death' and 'mourning' which I posit, concern the so-called 'death' of the reigning king. This is a subject beyond the scope of my thesis, and requires future research.

²⁷ Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 100. Griffiths is referring to the varying descriptions of Typhon, as 'drought', 'as everything harmful' and 'as the element that is without measure and order'. He explains: 'A unitary source compilation shaped by one viewpoint would not have shown such manifest inconsistency'.

²⁸ Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 100.

agreed that the 'exact nature of the Greek contribution needs also to be assessed'. The words of Griffiths are apt:

From the Egyptological point of view – and this viewpoint takes natural precedence in approaching a theme derived from Egyptian religion – the basic question is how far the detailed exposition of the myth and its meaning as presented by Plutarch agrees with the evidence of the native sources.²⁹

Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride*, chapter thirteen commenced: '*It is said that Osiris, when he was king, at once freed the Egyptians from their primitive and brutish manner of life*'. (my emphasis) Osiris is projected as a 'real' king who 'freed' the Egyptians from an undesirable lifestyle, that 'he showed them how to grow crops, established laws for them, and taught them to worship gods'. Plutarch presented Osiris as a king who leaves Egypt to civilise 'the whole world as he traversed through it winning over most of the people by beguiling them with persuasive speech'.³⁰ That the ancient Egyptians considered Osiris as an 'earthly' king and the Egyptians as 'primitive' and 'brutish' are uncharacteristic portrayals of the ancient Egyptian king and his people. Equally the notion that Osiris taught the Egyptians to worship gods implies that either they had no gods prior to Osiris or that the Egyptians were unaware of the presence of gods. Egyptian texts and archaeological evidence proves otherwise. Griffiths rightly observed:

The view of Osiris as a human king, and especially as a civilizer and bringer of culture... belongs to Greek rather than Egyptian thought and is clearly due to his identification with Dionysus, coupled with the equation of Isis and Demeter... To the Egyptians of the Old Kingdom Osiris was a god and a king of the dead.³¹

Further, Griffiths argued that it was from Demeter, the Greek goddess of agriculture, that the idea arose that Osiris was the discoverer of agriculture, and it was from Demeter as the 'law-giver' that this epithet was assigned to Osiris.³²

²⁹ Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 2. Griffiths attributes various influences imposed on Egyptian myth: 'Egyptian theology is here adapted to the Platonic philosophy', 21, 28; and 'The Iranian origin of Plutarch's system is beyond question'. 28. The latter relates to the light-dark, good-evil dichotomy personified as Osiris and Typhon; 'Many of the interpretations are intensely Greek and they derive principally from two traditions, the Neo-Platonic and the Stoic', 49.

³⁰ Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 309.

³¹ Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 309.

³² Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 309. See also Griffiths' comments: 'Osiris as the pioneer of civilization and the discoverer of agriculture, law and religion is a reflection of a Hellenistic image of Dionysus', 53.

Finally, Plutarch affirmed his overlay of Greek mythology when Osiris is seen through Greek eyes: 'That is why the Greeks thought he [Osiris] was the same as [the Greek god] Dionysus'.³³ It seems, therefore, that not only is Osiris given the overlay of the persona of the Greek god, Dionysus, but also some attributes of the Greek goddess Demeter.

Similarly, Plutarch assigns to Isis characteristics of Demeter. When Isis hears that the coffin of Osiris is washed up in Byblos, she goes there and sits down 'near a fountain, dejected and tearful'.³⁴ Griffiths observed that the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* described the goddess Demeter 'sitting down by the wayside, sad at heart, at the Maiden's Well, where the townspeople get water'.³⁵ Although in the Pyramid Texts there are many references to Isis in mourning for Osiris, Griffiths explained that 'the detail about her [Isis] sitting and weeping at a fountain is plainly taken from Demeter's myth'.³⁶

Plutarch described Isis as grieving so much over the coffin of Osiris that she gives such a loud wail that the younger son of the king of Byblos dies. Next, Isis is said to take the coffin of Osiris and the elder son of the king with her on the boat from Byblos, where the coffin was said to have been washed up. When the elder son approached Isis in her grief, she turned towards him 'and full of anger gave him a terrible look. The boy was unable to bear the fright, and dropped dead'.³⁷ That a 'loud wail' from Isis killed the younger prince of Byblos and her 'terrible look' frightened to death the elder prince, may have reflected the awesome Power of Isis envisaged by Plutarch. Significantly, in Egypt, Isis was never an earthly Queen as this incident implies; similarly, her consort Osiris was never portrayed in Egyptian texts as an earthly king. Both aspects are discussed in the next section.

³³ Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 309.

³⁴ Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 141.

³⁵ Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 324. See also Helene. P. Foley, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, ed., (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 6, lines 98-99.

³⁶ Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 324. See also Frankfort, *Kingship*, 292. According to Frankfort, Herodotus also equated Isis with Demeter, and Osiris with Dionysus, the latter became manifest as a pillar and has been wrongly associated with the *djed* pillar of Osiris. Thus any Byblos connection with the Osiris myth, described in classical sources, should be discounted; it is unlikely that this story originated in Egypt.

³⁷ Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 292.

Certainly the Egyptian Isis laments for her brother Osiris in both the Egyptian texts and Plutarch's account.³⁸ There are differences: the Pyramid Texts describe the character of Isis mourning for Osiris as a sister only; it is later in the New Kingdom that Isis joins Osiris and their son Horus as the divine triad of Abydos. Equally, Plutarch depicts an image of Isis, that in *solitude* she 'opened the chest and pressing her face to that of Osiris, she embraced him and began to cry'.³⁹ In mourning scenes Isis is never depicted in solitude; always she is shown in the company of her sister Nephthys or with other goddesses. Griffiths rightly disputed that the Egyptian accounts never refer to Isis opening a chest or sarcophagus, even though Egyptian texts describe her grief. 'It is you [Isis] who mourn over him [Osiris]'. (Pyr.1791) Similarly, Plutarch's description of the mourning Isis 'wandering everywhere in a state of distress' described accurately only the ethos of the Egyptian Isis. Conversely, that she 'passed by no one without accosting him, and even when she met children, she asked them about the chest' is an incident unparalleled in Egyptian narratives.⁴⁰

Although Plutarch's portrayal of the grieving Isis was similar to that of the Egyptians, absent was the interplay between her divine family members, particularly that of her sister Nephthys and their brother Osiris.⁴¹ The sisterly relationship is described in a Pyramid Text:

Thus said Isis and Nephthys: The 'screecher' comes, the kite comes, namely Isis and Nephthys; they have come seeking their brother Osiris, seeking their brother the King. Weep for your brother, O Isis; weep for your brother, O Nephthys; weep for your brother! Isis sits down with her hands on her head, Nephthys has grasped the tips of her breasts because of their brother the King, who crouches on his belly, an Osiris in his danger... (Pyr.1280-1282)⁴²

³⁸ See Richard H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003), 147-148. He describes Nephthys along with her sister Isis as representing 'the archetypal image of the mourner in Egyptian literature and art. Both goddesses are mythically equated with the kite, a bird of prey with a particularly shrill piercing cry which has been thought to have been suggestive of the cries of women wailing in mourning'.

³⁹ Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 143.

⁴⁰ Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 139.

⁴¹ In Plutarch's account there is no mention of Nephthys in chapters 13 through to 20.

⁴² I will discuss this text in detail in the later part of this chapter. Rather than the grieving aspect because Osiris the King has 'died', I posit this text symbolises the 'death' of the Horus-king and transfiguration, or re-birth, as the Osiris king. The text, on the one hand, justifies the offering of the mother breast of Nephthys and on the other hand, the grieving goddess signifies the traditional earthly pose of mourning. The Pyramid Texts are in fact, Texts which imply knowledge of transfiguration.

Moreover, Plutarch described how Typhon cuts up the body of Osiris into fourteen pieces, scatters them throughout Egypt, and Isis in her search found only thirteen pieces. 'The only part of Osiris which Isis did not find was his male member'.⁴³ Griffiths' comment is odd considering the superhuman nature of Osiris: '[I]t was unheard of that a dead person, still less one who had been deprived of his *genitalia*, could beget an heir'.⁴⁴ Nonetheless, it serves to emphasise the functional nature of the Egyptian Osiris-Horus kingship motif discussed in detail in the next section. Most problematic about Plutarch's account of the missing phallus of Osiris is that it is often quoted by Egyptologists as fact.⁴⁵ The Pyramid Texts testify to the intact phallus of Osiris when reference is made to the conception of his son and heir, Horus: 'Your sister Isis comes to you [Osiris] rejoicing for love of you. You have placed her on your phallus and your seed issues into her, she being ready as Sothis,

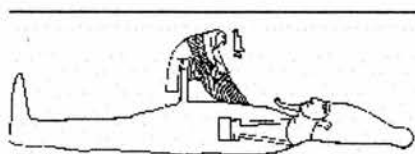


Fig.1 Conception of Horus

and Har-Sopd has come forth from you as Horus who is in Sothis' (Pyr.632-3).⁴⁶ Further, a relief in the New Kingdom Temple of Seti I at Abydos depicts the prostrate, mummified Osiris with Isis as a kite fluttering above him (Fig.1).⁴⁷

⁴³ Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 145.

⁴⁴ Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 352.

⁴⁵ See Margaret Bunson, *A Dictionary of Ancient Egypt*, (New York; London: Oxford University Press, 1995), 126. 'She [Isis] found all his [Osiris'] remains except for his phallus, which had been devoured by a Nile fish'. See also Section 29, 'Osiris, the murdered god', in Mircea Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas*, (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 97. Eliade contends that 'the most complete version of the Osiris myth is the one transmitted by Plutarch ... the Egyptian texts refer only to isolated episodes'. Eliade refers also to the dismembering of the corpse of Osiris by Seth into fourteen pieces. Isis found them all (except the sexual organ, which had been swallowed by a fish), 97,n.35.

⁴⁶ See Lichtheim, *AEL*, Vol. 1:35n.4. The heliacal rising of the Dog star, Sirius, or Sopdet, associated with Isis, signified the beginning of the *akhet*, the Nile inundation season, and by association, the period of fecundity. Har-Sopd is identified with Horus, the son of Isis.

⁴⁷ See also Frankfort's *Kingship*, 40:Fig.18. He comments that in a hymn to Osiris, Isis erected the tiredness of the powerless one [Osiris] and conceived [Horus]. See also Murnane, *Ancient Egypt*, 272. He described the relief in the main Osiris chapel behind the Temple of Seti I at Abydos: '[It] is the climatic moment during which the revived Osiris begets his son Horus on Isis [as a kite] before passing into the Underworld'. Further, on the conception of Horus in the Temple of Hathor at Dendera he commented: 'The crucial scenes are those in which the god brings himself to erection and impregnates Isis (pictured as a kite hovering above the bier) with the seed of Horus, future King of the living', 281. See also Wilkinson, *Gods*, 146. Wilkinson described the scene and allocates responsibility to Isis: 'Isis revived the sexual member of Osiris and became pregnant by him, eventually giving birth to their son, Horus'. Similarly, Christiane Desroches-Noblecourt, Tutankhamun: *Life and Death of a Pharaoh*, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1984), 250, 269. 'The Osirian legend...states that the goddess Isis, after being fecundated by the dead Osiris,

In the end, Plutarch appeared to find the 'fearsome' Power of Isis untenable. He concludes chapters twelve to twenty with the comment: 'The foregoing are pretty well the main points of the myth with the exception of the most outrageous episodes, such as those concerning the dismemberment of Horus and the decapitation of Isis.'⁴⁸ Conversely, in chapter thirteen, Plutarch alluded circuitously to what appeared as the supreme authority of Isis.⁴⁹ 'When he [Osiris] was away Typhon conspired in no way against him since *Isis was well on guard and kept careful watch*' (my emphasis).⁵⁰ In Plutarch's version, when Osiris was away from Egypt 'civilizing the whole world',⁵¹ Isis *alone* was able to dissuade the threat to Osiris from Typhon. Only on the return of Osiris to Egypt did Typhon require seventy-two men plus the help of the Queen of Ethiopia in his conspiracy against Osiris.⁵² Whether or not it was the intention of Plutarch to suggest that the goddess Isis was a Powerful queen, protecting Egypt until Osiris, the earthly king returned, there seemed clear indications to this effect. This view of Isis seems in contradiction to his earlier description that she was subservient to Osiris. Griffiths agreed: 'On the whole the picture of Isis is less Egyptian than that of Osiris'.⁵³

The central issue of the Greek overlay of Plutarch's version of Osiris lay in the absence of any understanding by Plutarch of the profound meaning to which the Egyptians attributed to Osiris as *Lord of the West* and *Foremost of the Westerners*. The West was considered the place of the setting sun, where the journey into the Afterlife began; the East was the place of rebirth in alliance with the rising sun.⁵⁴

whom she had invigorated ...' Also, Erik Hornung, *The Ancient Egyptian Books of the Afterlife*, (London: Cornell University Press, 1999), 34. 'Osiris remains entirely passive in the Amduat'. Scholarly opinions of the conception of Horus indicate that Isis is the active force in the conception of Horus.

⁴⁸ Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 20.147. The episodes relate to Egyptian texts, *The Contendings of Horus and Seth*. The incidents referred to are the decapitation of the head of Isis by Horus and the severing of the hand of Horus by Isis. These incidents are examples of the undesirable actions of the deities which the Greek Sophists and Philosophers rejected. The latter is discussed in chapter four.

⁴⁹ See chapter 13 of Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride*.

⁵⁰ Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 137.

⁵¹ In the Egyptian teaching Osiris is always considered the 'King of the Netherworld' – thus he did not leave Egypt.

⁵² The Greek Typhon is identified with the Egyptian snake, Apepi, the adverse force which threatened the journey of the sun god Ra across the sky and the subsequent rising of the sun in the East.

⁵³ Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 58.

⁵⁴ The close association with the daily rebirth of the sun in partnership with the reigning king is discussed in the later section.

Equally, Plutarch seemed unaware of the socio-cultural role of the Osiris-Horus motif of kingship, one that permeated the worldview of the ancient Egyptians. If Osiris was an earthly king then the concept of kingship as the stability and order of their society, as the ancient Egyptians experienced it, would nullify the core of their belief system. Frankfort suggested an explanation for Plutarch's disregard for the Egyptian perspective of the royal Osiris:

Whatever features the Greeks may have added to the original Osiris myth, they treated most cavalierly a trait which was of the greatest importance to the Egyptians. This was the royalty of Osiris. For the Greeks Osiris' character as a dead king was quite meaningless. To the Egyptians it was his outstanding characteristic ... that all other aspects of the god were derived from it. Yet the Greek accounts totally obscure these Egyptian beliefs.⁵⁵

Here is the kernel of the issue of the taxon 'myth'. If a narrative or 'myth' is considered a reflection of a culture's reality or beliefs, it is their story we seek to understand. Therefore, to impose the term 'religion' is one type of overlay which may distort a culture's reality. Equally, the pejorative baggage of 'falseness' carried by the term 'myth' is another overlay in the concept that my 'story' is true, your 'myth' is false. A further distortion may occur as a result of a researcher's subjective religious or cultural overlay; Plutarch's account is one example. Consequently, it becomes increasingly difficult to bracket the many superfluous layers in order to see the insider's reality, to decipher which layer to discard, which to retain. For this reason if the premise of phenomenology is to understand the 'other' culture, then the precedent ought to be validation by the insider, whether textually or otherwise.

As a phenomenologist of religion, Bleeker suggests that the phenomenological method implies not only the 'unprejudiced observation' of data but also 'an unbiased, critical yet understanding approach'. He commented on the problem of giving the wrong impression of data by using terms not adapted to the material. The Egyptian language has no word for 'belief', 'religion', or 'piety', although he offered that these terms are necessary for the study of religious-historical investigations. On the one hand he is aware that the word 'religion' is a concept absent from the Egyptian thinking, yet he appears to impose a religious value on his Egyptian research. On the other hand his investigation into the characteristics of

⁵⁵ Frankfort, *Kingship*, 292.

Egyptian deities appears to be on the whole one of considerable accuracy and insight in comparison to the work of Plutarch. If the aim of Bleeker is to try to comprehend the meaning of Egyptian texts, he appears to have succeeded.⁵⁶

Egyptian texts provide considerable data on Osiris. To the Egyptians the character of Osiris as a 'superhuman' king was as fundamental to the office of kingship as the concept of Horus as the earthly reigning king; their alliance indicated the Egyptian reality of the perpetuity of kingship. The fundamental characteristics of the god Osiris situate him in his mummified form as the superhuman ruler of the West, the final place of re-birth as Osiris of every reigning king. The epithets of Osiris identify him always with the Egyptian afterlife where he reigns supreme. Images of Osiris as an earthly king wearing the double crown of Egypt are absent; equally his name is not inscribed on any King List.

These facts point to a lack of confidence in the Plutarch version. Similarly, the Pyramid Texts describe Isis only in the role of a mourning sister alongside Nephthys. The key role of the goddess Isis in the office of kingship as consort of Osiris and mother of the reigning Horus king is absent in Plutarch's account. Her link to kingship arrives later in the New Kingdom period. The differences presented by Griffiths in his analysis of Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride* seem to confirm the research of this section. The main points of contention are the absence of any textual reference to Isis and Osiris as an earthly King and Queen in Egyptian literature. Of greater significance is that Plutarch was unaware of the profound significance the ancient Egyptians placed on their concept of divine kingship. This is not to say that the similarities between the Greek and Egyptian deities are insignificant, rather, their differences suggest the cultural identities of each society. Griffiths again seeks to understand Plutarch.

If this prominence of the cult of Demeter is characteristic of the first phase of the Ptolemaic era in Egypt – and the evidence is solid if not overwhelming – and if Plutarch is reflecting such an attitude in his direct and indirect comparisons of this cult with Isis and Osiris, what likely source is indicated thereby?⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Bleeker, *Hathor*, 1-21. A considerable amount of research on Egyptian texts has taken place over the last thirty years some of which adds to, or in some cases, modifies Bleeker's research.

⁵⁷ Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 92.

One of the main Egyptian sources Plutarch mentioned in his work was that of the Ptolemaic historian, Manetho, who wrote a history of Egypt, although he too wrote in Greek.⁵⁸ Griffiths observed: 'Great cultural influences must have strongly exerted themselves on Manetho at the court of his patron [the Ptolemaic king, Philadelphus]'.⁵⁹ Yet Griffiths reiterated: 'Direct or indirect citation can rarely be established'.⁶⁰ Griffiths is confident that Plutarch gained information from Egyptian rather than Greek priests and from Plutarch's own contacts with the Isis cult.⁶¹ Nonetheless, Griffiths suggested that Plutarch's preference was to use literary evidence studied at leisure rather than the 'testimony of his own travels in Egypt'. In the final analysis, Griffiths concluded: 'If we are tempted to deal harshly with him [Plutarch] for this, it should be remembered that his ignorance of Egyptian prevented him from using the worthwhile authorities at first hand'.⁶²

To summarise, Griffiths offered some defence of Plutarch's version of the so-called Egyptian 'myth' of Isis and Osiris and agreed that it was difficult for a 'fervent religious' believer to bracket their beliefs. Equally, it was clear that Plutarch's interpretation demonstrated that the Greek version was a character misrepresentation of two of ancient Egypt's important deities. Although Plutarch's version has described some significant cultural similarities, this section has identified clear differences between the Greek and Egyptian versions.

Consideration should be given to the fact that over three decades after the publication of the seminal work of Griffiths discussed here, scholars continue to quote the Plutarch version as if its origins and content are confirmed in Egyptian literature. Often the Plutarch account is accompanied by the comment that Egyptian sources are implied or are preserved in short allusions.⁶³ Griffiths referred to one

⁵⁸ See Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 98-99, and his frequent reference to Manetho as Plutarch's source.

⁵⁹ Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 79.

⁶⁰ Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 81.

⁶¹ To say there was an Isis cult in Egypt is to deny the New Kingdom relationship of Isis as mother of Horus and consort to Osiris. Her key role appeared to be in connection with the throne. This aspect is discussed later.

⁶² Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 98.

⁶³ Pinch, *Egyptian Myth*, 115. She described in detail Plutarch's version of Isis and Osiris, she followed it with the comment, 'This account has no exact parallel in Egypt, but Plutarch may have been drawing on local traditions and popular tales'. Earlier she made reference to Plutarch's account with the words, 'Sources like these gave rise to the habit of perceiving Egypt through Greek or Roman eyes. See also Kemp, *BD*, 25-26. Kemp acknowledged: 'For full versions of the Osiris myth we have

scholar's view of Isis in Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride* in that 'slightly less than half of the attributes here assigned to Isis derive from the ancient sources *although they may be Graecized in form*'⁶⁴ (my emphasis). Such a percentage indicates a significant distortion. Rather than to perpetuate the false impression further, it is important to situate the narratives of ancient Egypt clearly within the context of Egyptian society. As Kristensen suggested, it is what the ancient Egyptians value as *their* beliefs that phenomenologists seek to understand.

Given the absence of Plutarch's understanding of the centrality of divine kingship in the socio-political stability of ancient Egypt, the Pyramid Texts discussed in the next section reveal an interrelationship of some substance between the Horus-Osiris axis⁶⁵ of kingship and the pantheon of gods.⁶⁶ The question to be asked of the next section is to what extent does the Egyptian version of kingship demonstrate Plutarch's deviation from Egyptian sources. Equally, will a re-appraisal of the concept of divine kingship from the Egyptian perspective illustrate an ontic nature of transformation that was peculiar to the ancient Egyptians? Implicit in the Pyramid Texts is the distinction between the earthly life of the Horus-king measured in years and, in his transfiguration to the Osiris-king, time is eternal. The Old Kingdom Pyramid Texts, I suggest, are an appropriate primary source from which to begin the journey towards understanding the ancient Egyptian concept of divine kingship, a socio-political theology that permeated both their visible and invisible worlds.

to wait until near the end of ancient Egyptian civilisation, when Greek and Roman authors encountered Egypt as travellers or residents. The most detailed account is written by an ancient Greek scholar-priest, Plutarch, around AD 100'. A detailed account of the Plutarch version followed.

⁶⁴ Griffiths quotes D. Muller's *Agypten und die griechischen Isis-Aretalogien* (Berlin, 1961:91). In his book review in *JEA*, 49, 1963:196-97, Griffiths concluded that although Muller does not believe that a translation from an Egyptian original is involved, one explanation is that any similarities may be attributed to a Greek priest of Isis who had access to Egyptian sources.

⁶⁵ The 'Horus-Osiris axis' term was suggested orally by N. Wyatt.

⁶⁶ For themes of kingship, see Baines, 'Society, Morality', 128-129. Baines described Egyptian kingship as 'both the central institution and the main focus of Power in Egyptian society, and the text correspondingly incorporates generalized ideas of social order'. On the king as a god, see John A. Wilson, 'The Function of the State', 71, in Frankfort, *The Intellectual Adventure*, '[T]he king of Egypt was a god and that he was a god for the purposes of the Egyptian state'. See also Murnane, *Ancient Egypt*, 45-52.

3.5 Pyramid Texts: an Introduction

The Pyramid Texts of the Old Kingdom, historically the earliest *corpus* of Egyptian texts, are inscribed on the walls of the fifth and sixth dynasty pyramids at Sakkara.⁶⁷ The texts are often referred to as 'theological' or 'religious', occasionally as 'religious and mythological' texts or 'myth narratives'. Rarely, if at all, are the Texts classified simply as 'myth'. Griffiths agreed to the absence of any coherent mythology: 'Mythological allusions are sporadic and often unconnected'.⁶⁸ Vincent A. Tobin rightly offered that the Pyramid Texts were not intended to be a systematic exposition of Egyptian myth and theology. Rather, he observed astutely that the context is in some part connected with 'the royal political ideology'.⁶⁹

Accordingly, given that scholars had difficulty in defining the Pyramid Texts into a specific category of 'myth', this particular genre of texts resists the traditional phenomenological definition of 'myth' as a typology of religion.⁷⁰ Further, if the naming process in the phenomenological classifying process is an indication of the meaning of the texts, then the Egyptian meaning ought to have precedence. Of crucial importance to the understanding of the philosophy of the ancient Egyptians was the belief that the words which indicated speech or recitation, *djed medu* (*dd mdw*), when written on papyri or inscribed on the walls of their temples or 'houses of eternity', brought into existence what was written.⁷¹ However, it was required that the words, *djed medu*, were followed always by the name of a deity, or a deified person; the words signified the speech of divine authority. The ancient Egyptians believed in the reality of such divine utterances.⁷² The Pyramid Texts therefore

⁶⁷ Except as otherwise stated, for general information in this section see Faulkner, *PT*; Vincent A. Tobin, 'Selections from the Pyramid Texts', 247-262, in *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2003); Lichtheim, *AEL*, Vol. 1; Nigel C. Strudwick, *Texts from the Pyramid Age*, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005); James P. Allen, 'The Cosmology of the Pyramid Texts', 1-28, in *Religion and Philosophy*.

⁶⁸ Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 33.

⁶⁹ See Tobin, 'Selections PT', 247.

⁷⁰ See Jan Assmann, 'State and Religion in the New Kingdom', 56, in *Religion and Philosophy*, 55-88. Assmann described the terms 'state' and 'religion' in regard to ancient Egypt as 'anachronistic concepts' and explained that 'they are aspects or dimensions of one single indivisible theopolitical unity'.

⁷¹ Cf. Faulkner *PT*, 2, Utterance 13, n. 1. Because of the repetition of the phrase, Faulkner decided to omit the usual prefix, *dd mdw* from the translation when 'it is no more than a formal rubric'. For example, 'Recitation by Nut, (*dd mdw n nwt*)'.

⁷² See Assmann, 'State and Religion', 137.

demonstrated an important belief in the Egyptian concept of reality, that 'the word' was a creative force.⁷³

The importance of the Egyptian naming process in its functional form signifies the meaning intended by the ancient Egyptians. The word *akhs* (*3hw*), describe the transfigured spirits of those who have made the transition into the 'new world'. The place of transfiguration, the cosmic birthplace of the inert or 'tired' body into an *akh* (*3h*), is given the feminine form and named the *akhet* (*3ht*), translated as 'horizon'. This is the place in the sky where the sun rises and sets each day and where the *akhs* (*3hw*) exist in a divine community. The generic term therefore for funerary texts 'akh-makers' or *sakhu* (*s3hw*) indicates that the Pyramid Texts were the means in which spiritual transfiguration took place. The texts, however, carried Power; they were the causative means of transfiguration. Finally, the texts incorporated the Power of *heka*, (*hk3*), a divine power associated with the king, a term which signified knowledge not only of the predetermined questions and answers required 'to become' an *akh*, but also the nature, function and names of the various portals passed through on the journey.⁷⁴ Equally, the term *heka* translates as 'ruler', thus it is the ruler who holds the divine Power of knowledge of the written word. Jan Assmann, a Professor of Egyptology elaborates: 'The spoken word provides the ideal means of transposing the realities of 'yonder' world into this world of symbolic objects and rituals, but also of transferring the deceased to the beyond, while enabling him to retain his earthly capacity'.⁷⁵

Historically and politically, the Pyramid Texts indicated that transfiguration was initially the prerogative of kings, which in later periods became accessible to everyone. The Texts therefore offer some insight into the intent of the ancient Egyptians; our modern term 'funerary' lacks the subtle meaning of the process of transfiguration earlier described. At its core lay the Egyptian political ideology of the

⁷³ The term *heka* (*hk3*) was discussed briefly in chapter two.

⁷⁴ For translations and interpretations of Egyptian terms throughout this thesis but particularly in this chapter, see Alan B. Lloyd, 'Psychology and Society in the Ancient Egyptian Cult of the Dead', 117-134, in *Religion and Philosophy*; Faulkner, *Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, (Oxford: Griffiths Institute, 2002); Allen, *Middle Egyptian*; Stephen Quirke, *Egyptian Literature, 1800 BC*, (London: Golden House Publications, 2004); Assmann, 'State and Religion', 55-88; Assmann, 'Death and Initiation', 135-159; Allen, 'Cosmology', 1-28; M. Smith, *The Liturgy for Opening the Mouth for Breathing*, (Oxford: Griffiths Institute, 1993); Faulkner, *PT*.

⁷⁵ Assmann, 'Death and Initiation', 237.

office of kingship. At the apex of the living stood the king whose subsequent transfiguration into a spiritual *akh* followed the path of all previous kings in a perpetual royal Horus-Osiris alliance. Their domain *par excellence* in the new world was the sky. Given that the reigning king in the company of the gods sailed daily in the lunar and solar boats in a re-birthing ritual indicates clearly that the sky was envisaged by the ancient Egyptians as a watery expanse.⁷⁶

The Pyramid Texts concerned the characters of gods or superhuman beings. Equally, the Texts concerned the dual nature of the Egyptian divine office of kingship, a historical office in which the earthly king existed in human form. On his retiral from office the Horus king was transformed into the superhuman ruler Osiris. Such a human-divine alliance serves to demonstrate the Egyptian belief that the function of kingship was to maintain a continued world order in the repetition of royal rebirths.⁷⁷ The function of the Pyramid Texts appears not only to justify the belief of a continued royal presence; they also served to avoid the threat of chaos caused by the death of their king. The inference being that without kingship there is no order and without order there is no life.⁷⁸

Accordingly, to maintain order in the state of Egypt was to maintain the divine office of kingship. Equally, the status of the king is reflected in the physical presence of the royal pyramids. They conveyed to the populace not only an image of the continued existence of their king, 'writ large', but also that the order and stability of the Egyptian state as a socio-political institution, was maintained. The physical structure of the pyramids together with the Texts inscribed on the walls, demonstrate a royal socio-political ideology which incorporates theocratic Egyptian beliefs rather than a universal 'religious' dogma. Equally, the Texts described a theo-political reality shared by elite members of a hierarchical section of Egyptian society and visually shared also by the populace. The Pyramid Texts indeed concerned superhuman beings – divine kingship was the protagonist.

Validation of the Power of the earthly king is described in a series of Pyramid Texts under the heading: *The king becomes the supreme deity*. In what seems as a reversal of Power in one sense, the gods appear to be diminished in the presence of

⁷⁶ Cf., Allen, 'Cosmology', 7.

⁷⁷ See Assmann, 'State and Religion', 59.

⁷⁸ See Assmann, 'State and Religion', 61.

the king. Then again, it may reflect the absolute Power held by the Old Kingdom kings who believed that even the sun god Ra was subservient to royal Power. On the other hand it may reflect the lesser Power held politically and historically by the priesthood of Ra at this period. Nonetheless, it is the gods who are called upon to be aware of the king whose Power not only causes the gods to tremble before him, but the gods are to be subject to him.⁷⁹ The king mentioned in the text may refer to any of the fifth or sixth dynasty kings, whether King Unas, King Pepi or another Osiris-king.⁸⁰

Lift up your faces, you gods who are in the Netherworld, for the King has come that you may see him, he having become the great god. The King is ushered in with trembling... Guard yourselves, all of you, for the king governs men, the king judges the living in the domain of Re ... The King has power on his head, the King wields the sceptre and he [Thoth] shows respect to him ... the King commands what is good and he [Re] does it, for the King is the great god (Pyr.272-274).

In this context, the Osiris-king holds a formidable Power, as Plutarch suggested. Notwithstanding the texts which describe the Power status of the king, the Pyramid Texts are essentially a series of instructions or spells that provide for the transfiguration of the reigning earthly Horus king to Osiris as ruler of the Netherworld.⁸¹ The Texts demonstrate that the royal political ideology of ancient Egypt *expected* a continued royal presence in the Netherworld. Rather than a static philosophy, the Texts described changing beliefs which hint to earlier oral traditions of the king's rise into the sky as an Imperishable Star (Pyr.759). Political changes reflect an ideological shift to a new solar theology, the king sails in the sky in the solar bark of 'Millions of Years' with the sun god, Ra (Pyr.274). Then again, texts describe the transformation of the Horus-king to Osiris, ruler of the Netherworld in what appears as a royal Horus-Osiris alliance (Pyr.793).

Given that the Pyramid Texts convey various beliefs held by the Egyptians over time, my intention is to concentrate only on the Osiris-Horus axis of kingship

⁷⁹ See Faulkner, *PT*, 62, Utterance 252, n.1.

⁸⁰ Faulkner has chosen to discard the names of the pyramid kings preferring instead to use the general term 'king' because the rituals in the Pyramid Texts all pertain to the superhuman journey of every king.

⁸¹ Faulkner, preface to *PT*, vii. Faulkner translated the term '*duat*' (*dwꜣt*), as the Netherworld.

and any Osiris-Isis relationship of consequence. Even if the Power of the earthly king is validated in the Pyramid Texts, it cannot be said to substantiate Plutarch's belief that Osiris was an earthly king. Given that Osiris is first mentioned in the Opening of the Mouth ritual, the stimulus for the initial Horus-Osiris transfiguration, this ritual is the first to be analysed.

3.5.1 Opening the Mouth Ritual: 'O Horus who is Osiris, the King'⁸²

The name of Osiris is first cited in the Pyramid Texts in the Opening of the Mouth ritual which re-animates the inertia of the mummified form of the Horus-Osiris king.⁸³ The ritual is performed outside the entrance to the pyramid by his heir and son, Horus, to ensure the 'rebirth' or regeneration of the royal person prior to the final destination of the king to his house of eternity or 'house of gold' (*hwt.nb*).⁸⁴ The Opening of the Mouth ritual forms part of the '*akh*-making' process mentioned earlier and involves both the actual performance of the ritual as well as the Utterance or Recitation of the words.⁸⁵ The Horus-Osiris transformation is confirmed in a succinct re-naming ritual: 'O Horus, who is Osiris the King...' (Pyr.19).

The new Horus king, the old king's successor has enacted the coronation rituals, received the title of 'Horus' at his coronation, and has performed the Opening of the Mouth ritual on his royal predecessor who is now in the form of Osiris, his father.⁸⁶ 'Osiris, the King, I bring to you your son [Horus] whom you love, who will split open your mouth' (Pyr.15). The new king wears the leopard-skin garment of the royal Sem-priest (Pyr.223). The functions of the Sem priest were various: to

⁸² See Faulkner, *PT*, Pyr.16.

⁸³ The ancient Egyptians did not use the term 'death' rather they envisaged a form of inertia which would be re-animated with the various rituals of *akh*-making.

⁸⁴ The term 'house of gold' indicates the Egyptian meaning of the term 'tomb', in that gold is an untarnishable and permanent metal. The Egyptians envisaged a timeless existence 'like gold', rather than 'death' as we know it today. In a similar sense their 'house of gold' was also envisaged as a 'house of eternity'.

⁸⁵ For a more detailed account of this ritual see Smith, *Liturgy*, 14-15.

⁸⁶ The rebirth motif is seen not only in the Opening the Mouth ritual, when the outgoing reigning king is transfigured into Osiris, but also connects to the daily rebirth of every Egyptian temple, and the daily rebirth of the reigning king. Both are linked to the daily rising and setting sun. For a detailed account of the ritual see A. M. Blackman, 'The Rite of Opening the Mouth', *JEA*, 10, 1924:47-59; T.J.C. Baly, 'Notes on the Ritual of Opening the Mouth', *JEA*, 16, 1930:173-186; Frankfort, *Kingship*, Chapter 10, 110-121; Lanny Bell, 'The New Kingdom "Divine" Temple', 176, in *Temples of Ancient Egypt*, (London; New York: I.B.Taurus, 1998), 127-184.



Fig.2 Tutankhamun's 'house of eternity'

on his predecessor; thus, the earthly king is pivotal in the transfiguration process of his predecessor.

A visual display of the ritual is demonstrated in the New Kingdom 'house of eternity' of King Tutankhamun in the Valley of the Kings (Fig.2). He is shown in the mummified form of the potential Osiris; he wears the royal Osiris Atef crown and holds in his hands the royal sceptres. The other figure is King Tutankhamun's successor, King Ay. In his role of the royal Sem priest, he wears the leopard skin robe and the royal Khepresh crown. In his hand he holds the *adze* (*wr-hk3*),⁸⁸ the Opening of the Mouth tool which, when touched to the mouth of King Tutankhamun re-animates him; he may breathe, speak, eat and drink in the Netherworld. Cartouches of both kings, the outgoing Horus-Osiris Tutankhamun and his successor, Horus Ay, are shown on the walls.

Here is a pictorial example of the symbolic assimilation of the Horus-Osiris, son-father motif where King Ay is symbolically the Horus son of King Tutankhamun; in reality there was no familial connection. Although historically, Akhenaten is often considered the father of Tutankhamun, in the Opening of the Mouth ritual, Tutankhamun is transformed into Osiris by his symbolic father, the new Horus-king Ay.

⁸⁷ See Allen, *Middle Egyptian*, 56; Lloyd, 'Psychology', 126.

⁸⁸ Note the term '*wr-heka*' which is translated as 'great (*wr*) Power (*heka*)', thus the Egyptian's fluid use of language attributes the tool for Opening the Mouth, the *adze*, with the *heka* Power of the king as 'ruler' (also '*heka*').

An Old Kingdom Pyramid Text confirms the Opening the Mouth ritual and the words which actualise the transformation.⁸⁹ 'Osiris, the King, I bring to you your son whom you love, who will split open your mouth' (Pyr.15). and the transformation naming ritual: 'O Horus, who is Osiris the King' (Pyr.14). The transfiguration is complete; the earthly Horus-king, *Lord of Upper and Lower Egypt* is now the superhuman Osiris-king, *Lord of the West*. The iconography of Osiris in mummified form conveys the image of a king who rules in a superhuman world.

The enactment of the Opening of the Mouth ritual therefore transforms Horus, the 'eldest son', into Osiris his father; thus, the royal Horus-Osiris axis is in fact a son-father transference when the son 'becomes' the father. Only then may subsequent new kings ascend the earthly throne as Horus. In effect, all Horus kings become Osiris kings in a perpetual cycle of kingship; never is the concept reversed. The Pyramid Texts clearly describe a royal earthly-divine alliance where the earthly Horus-king rules supreme.

In the end, the fundamental role of the new Horus king is to demonstrate his royal Power; he is the instrument who transfigures the retiring king into the form of Osiris. The same rituals will be performed on the new king when he is overcome by inertia in a continued process of royal rebirths. The ritual allows also for the 'ka of kings' to pass from the Horus king into his new Osiris form (Fig.2).⁹⁰ Equally the newly enthroned Horus king is now in possession of the royal ka of kingship, a reciprocal Horus-Osiris earthly-divine alliance of Power. Accordingly, the 'ka of kingship' is a divine thread which permeates not only the reigning Horus king but also all past kings now named Osiris. Consequently, the office of kingship is a series of earthly-divine alliances of some magnitude. The royal primogeniture in the next

⁸⁹ I have inserted the names of Tutankhamun and Ay to clarify the neutrality of the texts. 'Osiris (Tutankhamun), the King, I bring to you your son (Horus Ay) who you love, who will split open your mouth', and 'O Horus, (Tutankhamun) who is Osiris (Tutankhamun) the King'. See preface to Faulkner, *PT*, vii. In all texts, the names or cartouches of the appropriate king would have been inscribed on the pyramid walls. Faulkner has chosen to render the name simply as 'King' rightly stating that 'the texts have in origin no personal application to one particular king, but are chosen out of a particular *corpus*'. Thus the general name 'King' designates the rulers of the 5th and 6th dynasties. See also Tobin, 'Selection PT', 247-262. Tobin has chosen to include the names of the kings; he describes Teti as 'Osiris Teti'. See also Lichtheim, *AEL*, Vol. 1:46, and her use of the term 'Osiris Pepi'. There are advantages to both methods; Faulkner differentiates between the Horus king and Horus the god of kingship.

⁹⁰ On the ka of kingship see Bell, "'Divine" Temple', 89, 92, 114, 140, 142, and 144; Lanny Bell, 'Luxor Temple and the cult of the ka', *JNES*, 44, 1985:251-294.

section validates the divine status of kingship; as Horus is the eldest son, he is the heir to the throne of Osiris; as Osiris is the eldest son of Geb, he is the heir to the throne of Geb.

3.5.2 Pyramid Texts: Royal Primogeniture⁹¹

Behind the concept of Egyptian kingship a royal ideology is present, a continual lineage of past kings, the Power of which rests ultimately on the earthly Horus king.⁹² The genealogy and divine inheritance of kings is described in the earliest Pyramid Texts; the Horus king has been reborn as Osiris. It is appropriate that he addresses the Great Ennead of the creator god Atum, a collective of nine deities. 'O Atum, this one here is *your son Osiris* whom you have caused to be restored that he may live. If he lives the King will live...' (Pyr.167).⁹³ The Spell or Utterance is repeated; Osiris directs his words to his divine parents, Shu, Tefnut, Geb, and Nut (Pyr.168-171). Osiris next speaks to his siblings Isis, Seth and Nephthys (Pyr.172-174). Finally, Osiris speaks to his *son*, 'O Horus, this one here is your father Osiris, whom you have caused to be restored that he may live; if he lives the King will live...' (Pyr.176). The outgoing Horus king now speaks as Osiris, one of the four children of the Ennead of the creator Atum, clearly identified in the Texts. The Horus-Osiris alliance is justified, that if Osiris lives then so also will the earthly King who was once inert; the outgoing Horus king is now re-energised as Osiris with the full support and participation of the Ennead. Isis is discussed only as a sister of Osiris; a deeper intimacy at this time is absent.

Textual justification for the right for Horus to claim the throne is confirmed. As the eldest son, Osiris inherits the throne from his father, the earth god Geb. The royal primogeniture is precise; divine kingship begins with Geb, who passes the

⁹¹ The term 'primogeniture' will be examined later in connection with 'the principle or right of inheritance of the first born child or (*male primogeniture*) son when the 'occupation' of the 'father' is handed down to the eldest son. In other words the occupation of the father as king will be the inheritance of the eldest royal son. See definition in The Chambers Dictionary, 1993:1361.

⁹² For example, the King Lists inscribed on the walls of the Temple of Seti at Abydos, Karnak and Luxor Temples at Thebes, and for example, the British Museum King List, EA117. The Abydos King List excludes the names of Hatshepsut, Akhenaten, Smenkhkara, Tutankhamun and Ay.

⁹³ 'If he lives the King will live'. The King now transfigured from Horus to Osiris will exist in the superhuman realm as an Osiris king. Also that Atum is said to have 'caused' Osiris to live indicates that the supreme creator god Atum has participated in the creation of Osiris as an *akh* with the full support of the Ennead.

crown to his eldest son, Osiris, who in turn passes the throne to his 'earthly' son, Horus.⁹⁴ In this context the Horus-Osiris axis appears to concern a royal interrelationship described succinctly in the Pyramid Texts: '... Raise yourself, O King,⁹⁵ for you have not died,' (Pyr.972) and 'Awake for Horus ... Raise yourself as Osiris, as a spirit, the son of Geb his first born...' (Pyr.793). Osiris is depicted as a key figure; his superhuman nature maintains a constant royal presence in the Netherworld. In this respect Plutarch has remained faithful to the *status* of Osiris. On the question of his rule in Egypt as an earthly king, the Pyramid Texts are silent.

The royal primogeniture theme is continued from the maternal perspective. In the previous section, Osiris spoke to the gods of the Great Ennead; the context changes when his mother, Nut, speaks. She begins with a preponderance of recitations as Nut, the sky goddess and mother of the king.⁹⁶ 'The King is my eldest son [Osiris] who split open my womb; he is my beloved in whom I am well pleased' (Pyr.1). 'The King is my beloved son, my first-born upon the throne of Geb, with whom he [Geb] is well pleased, and he has given to him [Osiris] his heritage in the presence of the Great Ennead...' (Pyr.3). The king mentioned in the texts is the earthly king, named Horus at his coronation, now 'reborn' into the Netherworld, as Osiris. .

Although the royal primogeniture appears to relate to the right of kings to rule, the sky goddess Nut is the maternal link who holds the Power of royal rebirth.

⁹⁴ There are various interpretations of Horus. He is the 'young Horus', son of Osiris and Isis, Horus, the 'sky-god', and the royal Horus linked to Osiris. There is no reference in the Pyramid Texts to Horus as a member of the Ennead of Atum, although he is later appended as the 'official' son of Isis and Osiris. The 'young' Horus is discussed in the Case Study, chapter six, in connection with an incantation text and the Egyptian god, Shed, later Horus-Shed. In the Pyramid Texts Horus is named throughout as *Heru* (*hrw*) rather than the familiar *Hor* (*hr*). On the difference between *hrw* and *hr*, see Mordechai Gilula, 'An Egyptian Etymology of the Name of Horus?', JEA, 68, 1982:259-265. *Heru* (*hrw*) is considered the 'oldest king's' title, namely an impersonal expression for "king".

⁹⁵ The 'King' referred to in the Pyramid Texts is identified by his cartouche inscribed on the pyramid walls. See preface to Faulkner, *PT*, vii. He has chosen to use the general term 'King' to stress the fact that 'these texts have in origin no personal application to one particular king but are chosen out of an existing corpus'. Thus he emphasises the essential continuity of the office of kingship as the stabilising force of Egyptian society. The 'King' appears as the main protagonist in the Pyramid Texts if only because the Pyramid Texts elucidate in textual form, his journey from the earthly world to his royal domain in the Otherworld.

⁹⁶ See also Faulkner, *PT* and a series of addresses to Nut in Pyr.777-786. I interpret the meaning of the goddess Nut as the mother of the 'first' king, that she is the mother of all kings, since the '*ka* of kings' is kingship in perpetuity. Therefore *all* transfigured kings are the eldest son of Nut and Geb, that is, Osiris.

Texts which demonstrate her Power as a mother are reminiscent of the Power Plutarch attributed to Isis.⁹⁷ 'Thus says Geb: O Nut, it is well with you; power was yours in the womb of your mother Tefenet before you were born, that you might protect the King' (Pyr.779). The presence of the deities in the Ennead of the creator god Atum reinforces the collective divine power contained within Nut, even before her birth. Her power is reflected further in the next text: 'You are violent, moving about in your mother's womb in your name of Nut' (Pyr.780). It seems appropriate that the Power of Nut is reflected in her recitations which validate the hereditary right of kings. Although she confirms that the authority to give Osiris the throne comes from Geb, her consort, it is the words of Nut which seem to carry weight.⁹⁸

Later in the New Kingdom period, the image of the mother goddess Nut is placed on the inside bottom of coffins; her arms are raised in *ka*-form to receive and embrace those seeking rebirth into the Netherworld⁹⁹ (Fig.3). The Pyramid Texts describe the Old Kingdom ritual: '[Y]ou [the King] have been given to your mother Nut in her name of 'Sarcophagus',¹⁰⁰ she has embraced you in her name of 'Coffin', and you have been brought to her in her name of 'Tomb' (Pyr.616). Nut is depicted in her role as the great mother whose body bridges the earthly and the superhuman worlds. When the earthly, confined 'body' is embraced in the divine arms of Nut, the ultimate destination is rebirth into the watery sky. Accordingly, the mummified being is returned to the body of the sky goddess, Nut, the 'universal mother' from whom royal births in the Pyramid Texts originated and from whom all future royal rebirths were forthcoming. The image of Nut is also seen on New Kingdom tomb walls. The tomb of Tutankhamun is one example; another is the overarching form of Nut on the ceiling of the tomb of Rameses VI.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ A particular aspect of the lack of Power of Isis is shown when Isis is included as part of the mother goddess collective.

⁹⁸ Faulkner, *PT*, 1. From the first eleven Utterances 1-11, only one, Utterance 2, is spoken by Geb with the words: 'The King is my bodily son'.

⁹⁹ See previous 90 and 96 on the concept of the *ka*.

¹⁰⁰ See Faulkner, *PT*, 119, n.7, and his comment: 'The interior of the lid of the sarcophagus, as a simulation of the sky, was sacred to the sky-goddess Nut'.

¹⁰¹ See Murnane, *Ancient Egypt*, 325. Murnane describes the image of Nut in the tomb of Ramesses IV in the Valley of the Kings, Luxor, as she swallows the western sun and gives birth in the Eastern sky the next day (Fig.4).

Nonetheless, the final question must be whether or not my interpretation is validated by the texts *as if* the texts are the intent of the ancient Egyptians. One interpretation may be that as the first generation of gods, Nut appears as the maternal impulse of creation. Consequently, if all Horus kings 'become' Osiris kings then Nut may be seen as the superhuman mother of *all* Egyptians kings. It is important also to recognise that the ancient Egyptians identified the presence of Power in both the male and the female. The question is whether or not any significance should be attached to the absence in the Pyramid Texts of any reference to Isis as the mother of Horus or the consort of Osiris. Historically, because the character of Isis as a powerful figure appears less significant in the Old Kingdom, she was one of a consortium of goddesses who assisted in the birthing of the new Osiris king. That she becomes a powerful figure in the New Kingdom period suggests a theo-political change in the concept of kingship.

3.5.3 The Royal Rebirth: Isis, one of Many

If the key motif in the Pyramid Texts was the perpetuity of kings, then the goddess Nut was the archetypal mother of all kings; it was later in the New Kingdom period that Isis as the mother of Horus gained significant Power. The Pyramid Texts provide textual evidence of Isis as a mother goddess; but she is part of a collective entourage of goddesses who assist and share in the various functions associated with the birthing process. The consortium of goddesses, therefore, are part of a royal superhuman drama in which they act out their role as substitute royal mothers and protectors.¹⁰²

¹⁰² There are other mother goddesses. See Pyr.1427-1428: 'Selket has set her hands on me, she has extended her breast to my mouth'; Pyr.2206: '...this king has come forth from between the thighs of the Two Enneads; he was conceived by Sakhmet, the King was borne by Shezmetet'; Pyr.262 where Shezmetet gives birth to the king. See also Wilkinson, *Gods*, 183. Attested in Egypt from the Early Dynastic Period, this leonine goddess [Shezmetet], believed to be a form of Sekhmet is 'associated with, or is a personification of, the *shesmet* girdle – a belt with an apron of beads which was part of the attire of kings of the Early Dynastic Period'; Frankfort, *Kingship*, 41-43. He continues: 'As the king could be proclaimed the son of various gods to express a relation of dependence and intimacy, so all goddesses could be addressed as his mother'. However, he emphasises what may appear problematic in that, as 'mothers' of Horus and the apparent Western logical consequence that the 'mothers' are therefore the 'husbands' of Osiris. It is the different roles attributed to kingship that Frankfort seeks to emphasise, that the two gods Horus, may be the same in one sense, yet different in another. He is both Horus, the son of Osiris and Isis as he relates to kingship and the throne, and Horus, *Lord of the Sky*, son of Hathor with the epitaph of Hathor as the *House of Horus* - Isis is named, 'the deified throne'. Frankfort stresses that Osiris is never the *husband* of Hathor as described in Pyr.466a: 'You are Horus, son of Osiris, the eldest god, son of Hathor'. Thus interpretation of the



Fig.3 Nut, her *ka* arms open to embrace in her name of Sarcophagus.Pyr.616



Fig.4 Nut swallowing the setting sun. Note the boats carrying the entourage of gods. Ramesses VI, KV9. Theban Mapping Project.15068

The most pervasive image of the mother goddess is the goddess Nut. She asks the Osiris king to arise into the sky: 'Your mother Nut has borne you' (Pyr.626). This unusual, Egyptian concept of motherhood, personified as Nut, is conceived as a geographic reference, the watery sky. In a different context, Nut is also depicted as a cow, 'long of horn, pendulous of breast' (Pyr.548), into whose body the sun god Ra and the earthly Horus king traverse daily in a perpetual process of regeneration. The reigning Horus king is not only identified with the royal sky god Horus, he is also the son of Ra. This is an example of the fluid inter-changeable concepts that permeate the Egyptian world view; the superhuman is intertwined with an earthly existence. Nut is depicted not only as the mother who participates in the Horus-Osiris transfiguration; she is present also in the simultaneous daily rebirth of the eastern sun and the rejuvenation of the living Horus king.¹⁰³

Textually, the cosmic event is described as a ferry journey from the Field of Rushes for the ultimate birth of the sun and the king, born 'between the thighs of

Texts suggest that Horus is both the eldest son of Osiris, as well as the son of Hathor. Here is an example of the fluid characteristics of the Egyptian deities.

¹⁰³ For a more detailed account of the goddess Nut see Lesko, *Goddesses*, 22-44. See also A.Piankoff, 'The Sky Goddess Nut and the Night Journey of the Sun', 57, 61, *JEA*, 20, 1934:57-61. Piankoff describes the role of Nut swallowing the sun in the evening, 'The majesty of this god enters her mouth'. In the 'house of eternity' of Ramesses IV, on the leg of Nut are the words, 'He opens the thighs of his mother Nut; he rises towards the sky'. Also: 'He moves towards the earth, rising and being born'. The context of rebirth associated with Nut described in the Pyramid Texts continued into the New Kingdom; all epochs have memories of the concept that 'the sun passed through the body of the sky-goddess at night'. See also images and description in Amanda-Alice Maravelia, *Cosmic Space and Archetypal Time: Depictions of the Sky Goddess Nut in three Royal Tombs in the New Kingdom*, GM, 197, 2003:55-72.

Nut' (Pyr.1188). Visually, Nut is depicted on the walls of the tombs of Ramesses IV and VI, with the various stages of the red orb of the sun depicted within the body of Nut. The entourage of deities in the solar bark are shown clearly in the burial chambers of Ramesses VI (Fig.4). Allen suggests that the sky itself was conceived as a 'cosmic amniotic sac' from which the king, like the sun, was reborn daily.¹⁰⁴ Significantly, the birth goddess, Mehet-Weret, is often described as the Great Flood, the primordial water, a celestial goddess who is often represented as a cow.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, the concept of a 'Great Flood' may be likened to the bursting forth of the amniotic fluid at childbirth.¹⁰⁶ Equally, the struggle of the birthing process may suggest the concept of the Osiris king 'drowning' in the bursting forth of the birth waters that indicate imminent birth.¹⁰⁷

Given that the ancient Egyptians witnessed the reality of the sun rising in the eastern sky each morning; it is understandable that they envisaged the cosmic region of the Horus-Osiris transfiguration and the daily rebirth of the sun in the eastern sky. Texts confirm that the king sailed on reed-floats from the Field of Reeds to arise in the eastern horizon of the *akhet* with the sun god Ra (Pyr.337). 'The Field of Rushes are filled (with water) and I (the king) ferry across on the Winding Waterway; I am ferried over to the eastern side of the horizon, I am ferried over to the eastern side of the sky...' (Pyr.340-41). The re-birth motif is a constant theme in the concept of kingship, both superhuman and earthly. Allen describes texts written on the walls of the temple of Seti I at Abydos as a 'description of the newborn sun'.¹⁰⁸ It may also suggest the symbolic physical rebirth of the king who, in the company of the sun god

¹⁰⁴ Allen, 'Cosmology', 17. For an alternative depiction of the sun god and the king traversing through the twelve hours of the night, see Hornung, *Afterlife*, 11- 53. The beginning of the Amduat stresses knowledge and describes the journey of the sun god through the twelve hours of the night, from setting to rising, often depicted visually and textually on the walls of royal tombs. In the conjoining of Osiris and Ra, past kings 'witness' the rebirth of the sun and the reigning king. In the Amduat, it is the meeting of the inert sun god Ra with the active energy of Osiris that results in the daily royal-solar rejuvenation. Equally, the image of the king and the divine entourage sailing on the watery expanse within the body of the goddess Nut, serves to confirm the socio-political centrality of kingship.

¹⁰⁵ Bleeker, *Hathor*, 25. See also Lesko, *Goddesses*, 23.

¹⁰⁶ There are numerous texts which describe flooding: 'the Field of Rushes is flooded', Pyr.1102; 'the Field of Rushes is inundated, the Field of Offerings is filled with water', Pyr.1206. Both Fields mentioned are situated in the *akhet*, the cosmic birthplace in the eastern side of the sky where the gods are 'born'. For the sky as a body of water see Allen, 'Cosmology', 6.

¹⁰⁷ Lesko, *Goddesses*, 28.

¹⁰⁸ Allen, 'Cosmology', 20.

Ra, displays the redness of the rising sun in a simulation of the redness that occurs in the birthing process.

The redness after birth,
as he becomes pure in the embrace of his father Osiris.
Then his father lives,
as he becomes *akh* again through him,
as he opens in his splitting
and swims in his redness.

Inherent in the concept of the Horus-Osiris transfiguration is the presupposition of his earlier royal existence in human form. Following Plutarch and the so-called mourning text of Osiris, quoted earlier, and discussed briefly in footnote 42. I proposed that the text may symbolise the cosmic rebirth of the Horus-king rather than the physical death of Plutarch's so-called Osiris, king of Egypt. The Pyramid Texts in principle concerned only the transfiguration of the Horus-king in his rebirth process to become the Osiris-king. In the book *Coming Forth by Day*, women are depicted mourning in the traditional pose with their hands raised to their head.¹⁰⁹ The Text under scrutiny describes a similar pose: 'Isis sits down with her hands on her head' (Pyr.1281). Next, the following text reads, 'Nephthys has grasped the tips of her breasts' (Pyr.1282), which may suggest the offering of the mother breast in the re-birth process. The final part of the text reads, 'because of their brother the King who crouches on his belly, an Osiris in his danger' (Pyr.1282).

Referring to the texts and images depicted in the Amduat inscribed with certain royal tombs, Hornung refers to the 'grave danger' caused by the sun when sunlight illuminates the seventh hour of the night. The adverse force of the snake, Apepi, attempts to distinguish the light causing the divine forces to protect the sun god Ra and Osiris, the combined regenerative forces of rebirth.¹¹⁰ Osiris therefore faces danger. The fact that the text refers to the 'King' signifies that it is the Osiris-king transfigured from the earthly Horus-king in a process of rebirth. Alternatively,

¹⁰⁹ For the mourning figures in Papyrus Hunifer, BM9901, see Faulkner, *BD*, 54. A similar scene of mourners in a funerary procession is depicted in the tomb-chapel of Ramose, Valley of the Nobles, Thebes.

¹¹⁰ Hornung, *Afterlife*, 38-39.

the danger may refer to the process of re-birth, either the difficulty experienced in childbirth or the high mortality rate experienced in ancient times.¹¹¹

Similarly, the dual nature of the Horus king is described. He is not only the 'lord of men and gods', he also 'governs men' (Pyr.895, Pyr.273). Geb declares that the 'King is my *bodily* son'. The birth of the king appears physical; he *splits open the womb* of his mother (Pyr.1). Additionally, the earthly nature of the human aspect of the king is denied together with his earthly parentage when he is recognised only as the child of superhuman parents. 'O my father, because you have *no human fathers* and you have *no human mothers*; your father is the Great Wild Bull, your mother is the Maiden... you have not died' (Pyr.438).¹¹²

Only in the denial of his earthly parentage may the Horus king enter and pass another doorway into 'becoming' Osiris. The Horus king's mortal form is the ultimate rejection of his human status; his words transform his earthly body into the substance of the superhuman. 'O flesh of the King, do not decay, do not rot, do not smell unpleasant... You shall lay hold of the Imperishable Stars, your bones shall not perish, your flesh shall not sicken, O King ... because you are one of the gods' (Pyr.722, Pyr.725). Because the Horus-king has undergone the ritual of the Opening of the Mouth ceremony, he is able to utter the *heka*-words of Power. His heritage has been confirmed; he may take his place as Osiris, son of Geb. The recitation of the words which deny his physical appearance is part of the ritual of 'akh-making', his ultimate superhuman transfiguration as an *akh*. Frankfort asserts that the dismemberment of Osiris

can hardly have been an original Egyptian belief ... The pyramid texts abound in spells in which Isis and Nephthys, Horus and Nut, "unite" the members of the dead Osiris; *they nowhere hint at an earlier wilful dismemberment*. The gods repair the normal results of decay – the

¹¹¹ There is ongoing research by Greg Reeder, contributing editor of KMT concerning a crouching figure, see 'A Rite of Passage: The Enigmatic Tekenu in Ancient Egyptian Funerary Ritual,' by Greg Reeder in *KMT: A Modern Journal of Ancient Egypt*, 5, 1994: 53-59. I have suggested that the figure may be the Osiris-king.

¹¹² Faulkner, *PT*, 221,n.9. He suggested that the king disowned his earthly parents. See also Pyr.2203: '...you have no human father and you have no human mother, for this mother of yours is the great *hwrt*-serpent... who dwells in Nekheb, whose wings are open, whose breasts are pendulous...' Here the mother symbol takes on another form, yet retains the basic concept of the mother principle.

dislocation... rats and jackals... and damage following the dissolution of flesh and tendons.¹¹³

Further research on this topic would bring considerable knowledge to our understanding of ancient Egypt.

The final transfiguration is a cosmic event. Nut with her two daughters, Isis and Nephthys, participate in the rebirth of the king. 'Nut shouts for joy ... Isis conceives me, Nephthys begets me and I [Osiris king] sit on the great throne which the gods have made ... I am your son, I am your heir' (Pyr.1161). Nephthys is described giving birth to the king who is conceived by Isis. Similarly, a goddess mother-daughter alliance is offered: '[F]or you [Osiris King] are a spirit whom Nut bore, whom Nephthys suckled, and they put you together'¹¹⁴ (Pyr.623). The potential Osiris-king is described as a spirit, signifying his ultimate transfiguration as an *akh*.

In the rebirth process, the mother's breast is presented to the Osiris-king. Rather than the breast of the mother goddess Nut, the breast of Isis is offered: 'Raise yourself, O King! ... you have your milk which is from the breasts of Mother Isis. Raise yourself, you child of Horus'¹¹⁵ (Pyr.734). The mother motif serves to suggest further that the Egyptians believed that the cosmic rebirth procedure described in the Pyramid Texts was a mirror image of the human birth process. In the earthly world, the mother's breast is the sustenance of the newborn infant; the Text describes a similar procedure: 'Take the breast of your sister Isis...' (Pyr.32a). The goddesses continue to play their part in the on-going drama after the Osiris king is reborn in his final ascent into the sky: 'I ascend upon the thighs of Isis, climb up on the thighs of Nephthys' (Pyr.379). When the Osiris king is finally crowned and enthroned in the Netherworld, the two sisters enact the role of the mother to the newly born king: 'Isis nurses him, Nephthys suckles him' (Pyr.372, Pyr.1873).

¹¹³ Frankfort, *Kingship*, 201. Frankfort is referring to the so-called deliberate killing of Osiris in the Plutarch account discussed earlier. His comments serve to offer further consideration to the physical deterioration of the body of which the Egyptians must have been aware.

¹¹⁴ The statement, 'and they put you together' suggests a time when the bones of the deceased were bundled together for burial before the era of mummification. I posit that this is a very different concept of Isis 'bringing together' the 'alleged' cut up parts of Osiris. For example, in the Pyramid Texts the terms: 'collect your bones' (Pyr.654); 'Horus has reassembled your limbs' (Pyr.635); 'he has caused Thoth to reassemble your limbs' (Pyr.639); and 'my bones are assembled for me, my limbs are gathered together for me' (Pyr.980). See also the decaying of the royal body described in Pyr.722 and Pyr.725.

¹¹⁵ See also Pyr.1883.

The Pyramid Texts describe the final ascent of the Osiris-king to his mother, the sky goddess, Nut. She is accompanied by daughter goddesses Isis and Nephthys, the sisters of Osiris (Pyr.755, Pyr.756). The Osiris king is placed *between* Isis and Nephthys, who protect and support the enthroned king. 'Isis has your arm, O Osiris; Nephthys has your hand, so go between them, all is given to you' (Pyr.960-1). The Osiris king is welcomed by his mother Nut: 'May you arise, O King ... equipped with the form of Osiris upon the throne ...' (Pyr.759). Rebirth is complete; the form of Horus has been transfigured to Osiris.

That the Horus-Osiris axis of kingship is a central theme in ancient Egypt's royal ideology is evidenced in the Pyramid Texts examined. Both royal roles are defined clearly, unlike the characters of the goddesses whose identities concern the functions of birthing. The Texts portrayed the goddesses in fluid roles which did not define them rigidly. Rather, their characters are blurred in a unified concept of motherhood. Later in the New Kingdom Period, the goddesses are given character roles of some significance. This may serve as an example of the fluidity of Egyptian beliefs; texts describe characters that appear to co-exist in an uneasy concept of a parallel reality. In the Old Kingdom Isis is insignificant in her communal birthing role. She was one of many who gave sustenance to the newborn king in her offered breast, yet in the New Kingdom, her role changes. She becomes a supreme royal goddess of Power, symbolic of the throne, a key figure in the triad of Abydos: she is mother of the reigning king, Horus, and consort of Osiris, ruler of the Netherworld. The dominant image of Isis is with young Horus suckling her breast.¹¹⁶ Her position in the Pyramid Texts was one of a consortium of goddesses who assist in the birth process of Osiris. Later, Isis gained prominence as the sole mother of Horus. Nonetheless, Nut rather than Isis is the mother *par excellence* in the Old Kingdom.

¹¹⁶ See Wilkinson, *Gods*, 147, and his comment that 'pharaohs of the New Kingdom and later periods had themselves depicted verbally and visually as the son of Isis'. For example, numerous images of kings being suckled by Isis are inscribed on tomb walls. For example, on his tomb wall at Thebes, Thutmose III is depicted being suckled by a tree goddess named as 'his mother Isis'. See also R.H. Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 1992), 46-47. He described the *situla*, a breast shaped container often held by Isis and associated not only with the concept of fecundity but also with Isis, as the mother of Horus.

3.6 Summary

In Plutarch's account of the so-called 'myth' of Isis and Osiris, there was clear evidence that his version contained extraneous data which betrayed significantly the Egyptian concept of dual kingship. If Osiris was an earthly king, as Plutarch proposed, then the structure of Egyptian socio-political society as they experienced it could not exist. It is only when the reigning king seeks entrance into the Netherworld that Osiris gains prominence.¹¹⁷ The Pyramid Texts discussed in this chapter have provided clear textual evidence to the existence of a Horus-Osiris alliance. Their ideology required that Osiris was the name of a superhuman king and Horus was the designated name for the reigning king. The constancy of the Horus-Osiris alliance throughout the historical period of the Egyptian state, suggests that the office of kingship functioned as a significant stabilising force in the orderly existence of Egyptian society. Accordingly, Plutarch appears to have misunderstood the basic concept of Egyptian kingship when he described Osiris, not only as the earthly king, but as one who travelled from Egypt to other lands.

This does not detract from the fact that Osiris is a key figure of considerable importance in the primogeniture of kingship and the transfiguration rituals. The royal monopoly of transfiguration into an *akh* ceased at the end of the Old Kingdom. By the New Kingdom democratization of royal prerogatives opened the transfiguration ritual to the populace.¹¹⁸ Throughout ancient Egypt's historical three thousand year period, the royal Horus-Osiris motif of kingship remained a key element not only in the office of kingship but also among the ancient Egyptians generally.

Given that the Egyptian concept of their superhuman beings was functionally very different to that of the Greeks, when Plutarch identified the Egyptian Isis and Osiris with the Greek deities Demeter and Dionysus, another distortion was created. In the Pyramid Texts, Isis is given a communal role within a mother-centred consortium; later in the New Kingdom her character role changes when she becomes part of the Osiris-Isis-Horus triad of Abydos. She gains status as the supreme mother

¹¹⁷ Griffiths, *Plutarch*, 6.

¹¹⁸ See Bleeker, *Hathor*, 8, and his comment that immortality was originally the prerogative of kings, prior to the later New Kingdom 'democratisation' of the mortuary cult to the ordinary people. See also Murnane, *Ancient Egypt*, 74: 'The adaptation of the king's mortuary cult for the common man – a process that has been going on since the end of the Pyramid age – is increasingly reflected in private tombs, particularly starting with the New Kingdom'.

of the reigning king Horus, the consort of Osiris and the hieroglyph for 'throne' on her head signified she was the Egyptian throne personified and deified. Plutarch hints at her Power, although there is no textual evidence which suggests that she was ever an actual queen of Egypt.

I have endeavoured to interpret the Texts as accurately as possible following the phenomenological principles of *epoché* and empathy, to bracket my opinions and value judgements. My aim was to 'experience' subjectively what the ancient priest-scribes had intended to convey in their texts. I was aware of the dangers of imposing an interpretation not present in the texts, given that many of the Pyramid Texts are obscure and may encourage speculation. Accordingly, my portrayal of the Horus-Osiris alliance of kingship with their entourage of birth goddesses has been objectively described with a subjective awareness of the Egyptian beliefs.

I have offered some interpretations of various points which would benefit from further research: First, I have suggested that the Textual description of the cosmic birth procedure may reflect the birthing process of the earthly mother and child or more appropriately a royal mother and child. I propose that the superhuman prototype of the mother goddess birthing consortium may be a reflection not only of the entourage of assistance given to the earthly Egyptian queen in the birth process but also may describe the physical experiences and dangers of childbirth within the historical timeframe. Next, the Texts suggest that the role and Power of the Osiris superhuman king appears as a mirror image of the Horus earthly king; the context therefore appears to be within a theo-political framework. Finally, the Texts appear to describe the need for the king to deny his earthly parentage when he becomes the child of superhuman parents. Similarly, he is required to reject his human form so that his substance is transformed into the element of the superhuman. The Texts suggest a human-centred concept of kingship, given that the royal scribe-priests were aware of the physical nature of their king. Thus further research may provide significant insight into the *ethos* of the ancient Egyptians.

On the question of the terms 'myth' and 'religion', the Pyramid Texts are silent. From an objective stance, the Texts may be termed 'myths'; they appear to centre round superhuman beings although the protagonist is the king. The question is whether or not the ancient Egyptians considered the transfiguration of their king to a superhuman being as an actual event. In consideration that the Horus-Osiris transfiguration remained a key element among kings throughout ancient Egypt's

historical period, later emulated by the populace, I postulate that this was a belief that not only served to unify Egyptian society but also was a force which maintained an ordered society.

On the subject of 'religion', given that the Texts concerned the rituals of kingship and the Horus-Osiris transfiguration, they fail to convey any concept of organised public worship identified with institutional religion. Finally if, as Kemp suggested, Egyptian 'religion' in the form of state-approved written texts is 'an intellectually manipulated construction'; this may be a viable comment.¹¹⁹ Believers, whether Egyptian, Christian or Muslim, may disagree that their faith is the result of human calculation. Nonetheless, Texts provide evidence that the Egyptian stories of their superhuman beings centre not only on the divine nature of king but also on his physical human form.

¹¹⁹ See Kemp, *Ancient Egypt*, 88-89; Lesko, *Goddesses*, 31.

Chapter Four

Myth Re-examined: the Religion Connection

But is 'religion' the right word? I don't think so.¹

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I first re-evaluated Plutarch's account of the Isis and Osiris myth and then provided a textual comparison of the Egyptian deities drawn from the Old Kingdom Pyramid Texts. Similar to the early phenomenologists' overlay of Christian beliefs, the results in chapter three demonstrated not only a Greek overlay of some substance; they also revealed a distorted image of Egyptian kingship. Moreover, my research revealed that Plutarch's account was generally presumed by Egyptologists as the extant version of the myth of Isis and Osiris.² My fundamental research method centred on the premise that to describe, interpret or understand another religion or culture it is necessary to see it from the insider view. It was essential therefore to strip away the Greek overlay to un-cover the Egyptian meaning of the role of kingship within the context of their belief system.³ Nonetheless, given human nature's propensity to be subjective rather than objective, to identify with 'sameness', the classical phenomenologists in chapter two appeared to agree that to achieve certainty of another's beliefs was an elusive objective. Scholars therefore rarely realised *complete* understanding of another 'religion' or belief system.

I concluded that the phenomenological system proved productive; to examine the empirical textual data with rigorous awareness of *epoché*, an endeavour was made to refrain from reading more into the texts than the ancient Egyptians intended. Therefore, re-examination of the data objectively followed only after I had understood the meaning and function of the texts from the Egyptian perspective. Because my self-conscious approach to the phenomenological method proved a

¹ Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, (London: Black Swan, 2007), 33.

² For a recent reference to Osiris as the first king of Egypt, see Karen Armstrong, *A Short History of Myth*, (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 50-51.

³ In this chapter I use the word 'beliefs' rather than the presuppositions inherent in the term, 'religion', the latter I interpret within the framework of the communal worship of a transcendent God.

positive experience, I intend to follow the same principles in my re-examination of the literature in this chapter. My aim is to re-evaluate the taxon 'myth' in its relationship with the construct term 'religion'.

The term 'myth' is not an exclusive category of religion. There are many studies which discuss in detail the multiple interpretations of myth; what the term 'myth' is, what it is not, whether or not the term arose from within a Greek context, and the association between the words 'religion', 'myth', *mythos* and *mythologia*.⁴ Equally important is the key issue of the concept of myth as a 'false story', whether or not its pejorative epithet is conducive to a myth-religion partnership. In this context, if 'myths' are just 'false stories', why does the myth-religion partnership persist? In the end, the search is for justification of and reasons why the term 'myth' continues to be classified as a typology of religion, given its ambiguous true-false impediment. Conversely, rational thinking may suppose that a false epithet is justification for its application to 'other' belief systems; 'my belief', 'your myth'. The second part of this chapter re-examines the issues which have resulted from the first section and compares them to examples of so-called 'myths' of ancient Egypt.

4.2 Overview of the Issues

The key issue to be addressed is that the religion-myth partnership predisposes the religious intent of the term 'myth'. If myth serves not only to identify the beliefs of a society but also to maintain societal order, then such a belief system

⁴ Unless otherwise noted this chapter is researched from the following sources: R. Buxton, ed., *From Myth to Reason, Studies in the Development of Greek Thought*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999); Alan Dundes, ed., *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth*, (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1985); Robert A. Segal, *Myth*, (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). Segal's recent 'short introduction' to myth is a comprehensive study of myth with reference to key authors who have written on the subject. Reference is made to the various theories and definitions from the disciplines of religion, science, philosophy, literature, psychology and society. See also McCutcheon, 'Myth', 190-208. For an overall view of myth from its beginnings through to the Enlightenment period and later, see Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*. See also Robert Segal, *Myth and Ritual Theory: An Anthology*, (Malden, Mass.: Oxford: Blackwell, 1998); Baines, 'Egyptian Myth'. On an alternative view of 'knowledge as an instrument of power', see Baines, *Restricted Knowledge, Hierarchy, and Decorum: Modern Perceptions and Ancient Institutions*, JARCE, 27, 1990:1-23. Also Wyatt, 'Mythic Mind'; Kirk, *Myth*; Lawrence Coupe, *Myth*, (New York; London: Routledge, 1997); The myriad works of Mircea Eliade on myth are referenced in the Bibliography. For a collection of Scandinavian papers from the disciplines of Egyptian religion and the history of religion, see Gertie Englund, ed., *The Religion of the ancient Egyptians: Cognitive Structures and Popular Expressions*, (Stockholm: S. Academiae Ubsaliensis, 1987); Lana Troy, *Patterns of Queenship in Ancient Egyptian Myth and History*, (Stockholm: Universitetet, 1986).

in ancient Egypt, for example, may incorporate socio-political aspects of, in particular, law, economy, protection and defence of their land and people. The issue therefore concerns the meaning intended by the phenomenological term 'religion' when used in conjunction with the term 'myth'. Two of the consequences of the religion-myth partnership identified in chapter two are the true-false dichotomy and the universal status of myth.

A recent comment by the Egyptologist, G. Pinch exhibits self-conscious awareness of the myth-religion issue in Egyptian Studies that 'In the English-speaking world comparatively few Egyptologists now specialise in religion and myth'.⁵ The aim of Egyptologists is to study the Egyptians as a people, given that 'myth', as a rich source of information, articulates their core values. The shift is towards the concept of the 'culture' of ancient Egypt, away from the inappropriate term 'religion'. Cultural relativism is the reason given by Pinch because recently, 'Egyptologists have striven to treat Egyptian religion in a non-judgemental way'.⁶ This statement serves to indicate the presence of *epoché* in some part, that scholars now merit a religion or culture from within its own framework.⁷

Conversely, in the study of religions the term 'myth' continues to be classified as a universal typology. Given the consensus among scholars that myth is a 'story', one that concerns superhuman beings whether as God, gods, or as Eliade proposed, other supernatural phenomena, each 'story' is culturally relative to each society. In consideration that the term 'myth' means different things to different people, there are clear definitional issues. A problem in today's secular world is that 'myth' generally means 'false'; the concept of 'myth' as 'true' had to be rejected by definition, if only because of our modern scientific standards of theory and proof.⁸ In the phenomenology of religion the term 'myth' as a typology of religion may be interpreted as either 'true' or 'false' depending on whose beliefs are the subject under discussion. In chapter two, an example was given in context when the classical

⁵ Geraldine Pinch, *Egyptian Myth*, 13.

⁶ See Pinch, *Egyptian Myth*, 12-13. See also a detailed analysis of the religion-myth problem by Baines, 'Egyptian Myth', 81-105.

⁷ Chapter six demonstrates my phenomenological method to the literature of ancient Egypt.

⁸ For a similar view on the 'reality' of religion, see Hans H. Penner, 'You don't need a myth for information', 153-170, and Nancy K. Frankenberry, 'Religion as a "mobile army of metaphors"', 171-187, in Nancy K. Frankenberry, ed., *Radical Interpretation in Religion*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

phenomenologists demonstrated the either-or concept of ‘my belief’ or ‘your myth’. Armstrong offers another example. When the Bible is removed from its ritual context, it is easier to approach it in a secular manner for factual information, reading it like any other modern text.⁹ It is no longer a subjective study; my belief. A similar argument can be made for all societies’ texts or myths when taken out of context. Hence, my objective is to ‘see’ as far as possible from the insider view.

In the academic world, many disciplines offer their own theory of myth: in anthropology myth is cultural; sociology interprets myth as an aspect of society; and psychology presents myth as a theory of the mind. Most disciplines therefore incorporate a society’s myth within the framework of their *raison d’être*. Occasionally, however, different disciplines gain insight when working together. Wyatt describes the process as ‘rehabilitation’, when myth, as the prodigal son, returns to the fold of biblical scholars and systematic theologians, enriched with the insights gained from alien peoples such as anthropologists and psychologists.¹⁰ Consequently, myth, when freed from the confines of the narrow category ‘religion’, was enriched by its contact with other disciplines. My Case Study in chapter six illustrates an inclusive socio-cultural approach to Egyptian texts.¹¹

On the whole, all theories tend to interpret their concept of ‘myth’ with a natural predisposition towards their discipline, each offering their supporting arguments to justify their competing ‘truth’ claims. Moreover, implied in the various theories of myth are imaginary aspects of a community segregated into different areas of importance rather than one whose different parts integrate society as a whole. Kirk’s comment presents another perspective; that it is essential we understand what myths are, what they are not and what is their function. He rightly concluded on differences that it is self-evident that ‘myths do not have a single form, or act according to one simple set of rules, either from epoch to epoch or from

⁹ Armstrong, *Myth*, 123-124.

¹⁰ Wyatt, ‘Mythic Mind’, 3, 3,n.3. See also Segal, *Myth*, 5. Segal challenged a ‘too rigid’ approach to myth: ‘For theories from, above all, religious studies, the main characters in myth must be gods or near-gods. Here, too, I do not propose being so rigid. If I were, I would have to exclude most of the Hebrew Bible, in which all the stories may *involve* God but, apart from only the first two chapters of Genesis, are at least as much about human beings as about God. I will insist only that the main figures be personalities – divine, human, or even animal’.

¹¹ Following Segal, I seek to avoid a too-rigid approach to ‘religious’ texts. I use the neutral term ‘texts’ rather than the value-laden ‘religious’ texts.

culture to culture'.¹² Although he argues there is no single type of myth, this is not to say that myths may not have a primary mode of mythical expression, a creation myth is one example. Nonetheless, myth can be applied in different ways and to different ends.

For example, creation myths may signify a universal concept, although societal differences reveal their cultural identities. Equally, kingship may be a universal concept which serves different functions in different cultures, but to classify *divine* kingship as a universal typology of religion is to deny the cultural differences that identify each society. Kirk argues therefore that myth is likely to reflect 'problem-reflecting aspects beyond what is implied by trivial aetiology'. The ancient Egyptian focus on a 'future' superhuman life is one example, whether or not in this context the texts, peculiar to the ancient Egyptians, may be considered 'myths'. Thus, Kirk's comment on the 'error of universalist theories' seems to suggest that 'myth', as a universal typology of religion, is an unsustainable classification.¹³ On the one hand, the insider voice is muffled; the customs and rituals that identify each society are unified within an external framework of universal sameness. On the other hand, the phenomenologist of religion may consider that the believer's voice is not being heard clearly.

Accordingly, there are many theories of myth among academic disciplines and, equally, there are many forms of myth that abound in different cultures. Given the multiplicity of theories and forms of myth as well as the dichotomy of the true-false nature of myth, why does the elusive term 'myth' persist in many disciplines of the academic world? If there is little consensus among scholars of a universal definition of 'myth', and in consideration of the 'near absence of narratives about the gods that can easily be termed myths',¹⁴ then why is myth classified as a universal typology of religion?

¹² Kirk, *Myth*, 2.

¹³ See Kirk, *Myth*, 252-253.

¹⁴ Baines, 'Egyptian Myth', 81.

4.3 The Problem of Definitions

Segal commented that the different theories of myth result from the questions asked and the responses received from different disciplines.¹⁵ Thus many modern theories of myth are decided on by the questions posed by other disciplines such as anthropology, psychology, and sociology, as well as religious studies and theology. Conversely, when examining ancient texts, with no verification from their adherents, the scholar who seeks understanding may interpret both the questions posed and the answers received within a subjective view, their responses based on preconceived ideas. If questions centre on the religious essence of a typology then the responses may be predisposed towards identifying only the 'religiousness' of the phenomenon. The question of the form of the religious 'essence' follows. The typology 'sacred texts' or 'scriptures' is an example. Armstrong's earlier comment voiced her concern that when sacred texts were read as objective secular texts, their sacredness is demeaned alongside the biblical meaning intended by the Christian believers. Thus, the framework of the questions asked of ancient texts may be weighted towards the answer required by a particular discipline: Near-East archaeology was first intended as verification of historical, biblical claims.¹⁶ The so-called polytheism of ancient Egypt was compared unfavourably to the Western concept of monotheism.¹⁷

If there are many theories of myth, each from different disciplines, then one may concede that the category 'myth' is restricted within the boundaries of the theory of each discipline, whether religion, science, society, anthropology,

¹⁵ Segal, *Myth*, 2-3. On the problem of the form and type of question asked, see Richard Dawkins with Muriel Gray, 19 August 2005, Edinburgh International Book Festival. See Appendix for full extract. Dawkins used the apparent suicidal action of a moth flying into a candle flame as an analogy to a question addressed to him about religion: Is religion itself a revolutionary tool? He replied to the questioner: 'I think you have to rephrase the question [about religion]. Biologists are accustomed, when they are confronted with a puzzling piece of behaviour, to asking, "What is its Darwinian survival value? Why is it there? Why do these animals do it?" Sometimes that is the wrong question. Sometimes you are focusing on the wrong thing when you ask that question. A good illustration of that is the habit that insects show at night of flying into candle flames. We all know that behaviour and it would be tempting to say that it is suicidal, self-immolation or self-sacrificial behaviour. What is the survival value of a moth committing suicide by flying into a candle flame? However, I think that that is the wrong way to express the question. Instead, we have to ask, "What is going on in the moth's nervous system when it flies into a candle flame?"'

¹⁶ John Romer, *Great Excavations: John Romer's History of Archaeology*, (London: Cassell, 2000), 164-165.

¹⁷ Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 21. Kristensen compares the 'us' of monotheistic faiths to the polytheism of the Ancients: 'The ultimate and autonomous is seen as divine energy, even in events and objects which would not induce *us* to worship' (his emphasis).

philosophy or other. Segal's comment is justified: 'There are no theories of myth itself, for there is no discipline of myth in itself'.¹⁸ Equally *mythos*, within its Greek context, is a word which signifies a story or account the meaning of which is empty without a contextual framework. Thus each theory is the answer to the prognostic questions asked by different disciplines. If, however, myth reflects the ideology of a society, whether or not that ideology concerns superhuman beings, then in this context myth may serve to unite and maintain societal order. A society's ideology therefore in textual form is their reality; it may incorporate some if not all theories of the different disciplines. The presupposition is that what binds a society together is 'religion'. Within the boundaries of the disciplines of religion and theology, the problem appears unresolved if only it is suggested, because of the lack of a clear definition of 'myth'. Wyatt explained his position:

One of the problems which besets the whole issue is that no adequate definition of myth has ever been agreed, and this is perhaps especially true among biblical scholars, with the result that inadequate definitions have been paraded briefly, adopted uncritically, applied indiscriminately, and used dismissively.¹⁹

Since there appears to be no scholarly consensus for a definition of 'myth', that different disciplines propose different theories, to suggest another definition of myth to the myriad of definitions proposed by scholars would perpetuate the confusion.²⁰ The confusion which results from the myriad of definitions of the term myth appears to challenge its universal status as a typology of 'religion'.

4.4 The Problem of 'Truth'

In 1969, Eliade wrote: 'If in every European language the word "myth" denotes a "fiction", it is because the Greeks proclaimed it to be such twenty five centuries ago'.²¹ I have chosen to use Eliade's words as the model of my enquiry since he is one of many scholars who voice the view that the term 'myth' arose within a Greek context. Over thirty years later, contemporary scholars continue to

¹⁸ Segal, *Myth*, 2.

¹⁹ Wyatt, *Mythic Mind*, 4.

²⁰ On some definitions of 'myth', see Strenski's quotation on the 'workshops of the myth industry', *Four Theories*, 1-2, and Wyatt's comment in 'Mythic Mind', 3,n.2: 'These views did not prevent Strenski from adding to the industrial output'.

²¹ Eliade, *Quest*, 72.

hold that inherent in almost all definitions of ‘myth’ is the question of its legitimacy. Segal, writing in 2004, noted that today the term ‘myth’ is generally regarded as ‘false’ with the expression, ‘Myth is “mere” myth’.²² Barber in 2005 agrees that *mythos* is often synonymous with untruth: ‘Oh, that’s just a myth’.²³ In contemporary literature, when ‘myth’ is designated as a ‘false story’ or as the Greeks proposed, a ‘story told for children’, there is implicit in these assumptions that these so-called myths are not ‘our sacred stories’ but belong to some ‘other’ culture.

On a different level, when someone calls something a ‘myth’, claims are being made about its relative level of *validity* and *authority* in comparison with other sorts of discourse.²⁴ When an authority deems that their ‘sacred story’ is true, that the ‘sacred story’ of the other culture, designated as ‘myth’, is ‘false’, there is implicit in both assertions that the words are words of ‘power’ spoken from a source of authority and knowledge; whether superhuman, political or otherwise.²⁵ This position was described in chapter two when Christian stories of salvation were reasoned to be ‘not merely a myth’.²⁶ Nonetheless, today, the essential issue is the ‘false’ epithet carried by the word itself.

It is generally agreed that the particular *form* of myth as an authoritative story binds and identifies each community. For example, the Christian salvation theme may be the religious authority which unites the Christian community. In ancient Egypt the authoritative power was the theo-political office of kingship.²⁷ On one level the concept of truth equates to authority; however, if a ‘statement’ is not approved by authority, then it is deemed ‘false’. From a different perspective, the word ‘heresy’ signifies a false doctrine, a belief contrary to the authorised religious teaching of a particular society; heresy is therefore a ‘false’ belief. Given that a

²² Segal, *Myth*, 6.

²³ Elizabeth Wayland Barber and Paul T. Barber, *When they Severed Earth from Sky: How the Human Mind Shapes Myth*, (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 149.

²⁴ Lincoln, preface to *Theorizing Myth*, ix.

²⁵ See Wyatt, *Space and Time*, 3,n.8, and his comment on exclusive truth-claims: ‘... no religion should be regarded as having the monopoly of ‘truth’. There is no cognitive ‘truth’ in religious claims’.

²⁶ The concept of ‘myth’ in Egyptian texts as a source of power, authority and knowledge is introduced in the next chapter and serves as the framework for chapter six.

²⁷ I use the term theo-political in the context that the office of kingship in ancient Egypt was considered theocratic rather than ‘religious’.

culture's ideology is revealed in their 'stories', that they are true, then the polemic use of the term myth to signify the 'other' culture's story may be indicative of the application of the term 'myth' meaning false or heretical. Significantly, most cultures use texts and/or rituals to authenticate their power, indicating that there is an either-or dichotomy; either they are true or they are false signifies clear concepts of whose knowledge is Power.

The dilemma of a truth claim is explained when the term 'myth' is applied to the narratives of the Hebrew Scriptures in that some hostility is noted.²⁸ Since 'myth' has long been associated with 'false' stories, it is understandable that some Jewish scholars protest when their sacred narratives, unique to their faith, are identified with the 'untrue' nuance of 'myth'. Thus, from the insider or subjective viewpoint, adherents are aware that their 'stories' reflect the true beliefs of their community. When their 'stories' are defined objectively, within the universal typology 'myth' with the baggage of falseness attached, then the term 'myth' is untenable.²⁹

Finally, I suggest that different forms of narrative in which myth plays its part, express qualitatively different kinds of thinking. The use of what appears as the conflicting terms *emic* and *etic* may be considered complementary views of different forms of 'truth' claims. Germane to the *emic* view is the understanding that 'my story' is an account of 'my' truth-claim and is an integral part of 'my' socio-political world view. The word '*emic*', first coined by the linguist Kenneth L. Pike, is culture-specific and concerns the beliefs held by a particular society. According to Pike, the system first used to understand linguistic behaviour, could now be applied to human behaviour; the more appropriate word *emic* was created from the language sound-based, [phon]emic. For Pike, his key feature was that an *emic* account of a society's beliefs should be validated by the adherents of that society.³⁰

²⁸ Wyatt, *Mythic Mind*, 3.

²⁹ A student in my 2005 class had mentioned that he found one of the recommended course books difficult because the author had stated that 'Yahweh was a myth'. His difficulty arose, he said, because as a Christian, he believed that Yahweh was real. See also L. Honko, 'The Problem of Defining Myth', 42, in *Sacred Narrative*, 41-52. Honko writes: 'To call the Resurrection a myth may be a dastardly insult to a Christian for whom the concept [of myth] has a pejorative sense. He would probably prefer some such expression as holy story or sacred history...'

³⁰ Marvin Harris, who offers an alternative theory to Pike proposes that a 'community of observers themselves must decide' on what is, or is not, the beliefs of the community as a whole. See Thomas N. Headland, et al., *Emics and Etics: the Insider/Outsider Debates*, (Newbury Park; London: Sage, 1990), 38.

The term *etic*, extracted from [phon]etic, is an account of a belief system that may be applied and compared to other societies, and is thus *universal* or *culture-neutral*. For example, the scholarly, view observes a society's 'myths' from an outsider perspective; one formed by similarities of typologies and comparative analysis.³¹ A societal, universal, *etic* account lacks the validation of particular cultures but its general approach leads towards the subjective *emic* account of a society's stories.³² The aim is towards an *interrelated* subjective-objective, *emic-emic* understanding of the beliefs of the adherents.

From an Egyptian perspective, I argue that the texts that concern superhuman beings are *emic* accounts in that they are specific to the culture of ancient Egypt. Although the words 'emic' and 'etic' do not translate adequately to 'insider' and 'outsider', there is an inter-related, local-universal connection in that each society is an integral part of the universal human society. For example, if 'myths', 'sacred stories' or 'texts' are accounts of the deeds of superhuman beings, then in this context, they are universal *etic* accounts in that they are culturally neutral. Conversely, if the deeds concern gods and goddesses that relate specifically to the rituals of Egyptian deities, then they are *emic* accounts that concern the culture of ancient Egypt. Here is an example of a system which will benefit phenomenology since one culture may not be understood in isolation, but only when in comparison to other cultures.

Segal offers a theory of the insider view: 'A theory which maintains that myth functions to unify society may circumvent the issue of truth by asserting that society is unified when its members *believe* that the laws they are expected to obey were established long ago by revered ancestors'.³³ Thus from the objective outsider view, myth 'may *circumvent* the truth'; the insider view believes their story *is* true. It is a question of whose definition we follow, whose truth claim to which we adhere.

³¹ See William E. Paden, 'World', 335, in *Guide to the Study of Religion*, 334-47.

³² See Headland, et al., *Emics and Etics*, 31. The *emic-etic* concept is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

³³ Segal, *Myth*, 4. Segal suggested that it was not an issue whether or not the 'truth' had originated with the 'revered ancestors'. See Lillian E. Doherty, *Gender and the Interpretation of Classical Myth*, (London: Duckworth, 2001), 100. Similarly, Doherty contends: 'A myth "belongs" to the people who tell it, and it in turn shapes their sense of who they are'.

Equally problematic is the phenomenological premise that the beliefs of the adherent of a 'religion' are true, even though there may be different doctrines among adherents; they are true for each believer. Christianity is one such example of the multiform nature of one faith. For example, in the form of Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic and the many denominations of Protestant churches, each belief may be validated by the adherents of each denomination. The religions of Judaism and Islam evidence similar multiform belief patterns.³⁴

Thus, a universal definition of myth as a religious typology seems an insurmountable issue when different doctrines arise in what was earlier a universal faith. A fissure is created which results in different truth claims and the question of whose 'myth' is true. In such a situation, religion fails to be a unifying force for society. Stephen Quirke presents the issue from another perspective, suggesting that rather than approaching Egyptian texts, iconography and archaeology from a religious context, it may be more appropriate if, rather than within a mythic connotation, they are considered as art, poetry or philosophy. He continued that

religion itself has ceased in European lands to function as a binding force; religions cross national boundaries and are not confined to one land, and the nation-state now enjoys other means of uniting its inhabitants, leaving the individual to organise his or her own response to existence.³⁵

In the end, when the term 'myth', a so-called 'slippery' category,³⁶ is applied to the narratives of 'other' religions or cultures, not our own, it is then reasoned that the stories that define their beliefs are 'myths', that is, they are 'false'. Similarly, when applied to other denominations within, for example, Christianity, Islam or Judaism the truth issue of 'myth' is perpetuated further.³⁷ In the end, the problem appears more than one of definition or truth claims; rather, the baggage of falseness is attached to the word 'myth' itself. It is an issue which persists.

³⁴ This is the problem envisaged by Harris, see previous, 30, that the many different beliefs of a 'religion' may cause confusion as to whose 'meaning' is taken as the exemplar.

³⁵ Quirke, *Ancient Egyptian Religion*, (London: British Museum Press, 1992), 19.

³⁶ The term is used by Satlow, 'Disappearing Categories', 17.

³⁷ For a detailed and wide-ranging critique on the distinction between 'true-and-false' and 'verifiably-true' propositions, the problem of 'knowable knowledge' by the insider, and whether or not different insiders may have 'exactly the same perceptual worlds', see Philip L. Tite, 'Naming or Defining? On the Necessity of Reduction in Religious Studies', *CR*, 5, 2004:339-365.

The next section concentrates on the origins of the term 'myth', how and why the term arose historically, the apparent changing meaning of the terms *mythos* and *logos*, the context in which myths or *mythos* were first written and the reasons why myth may have received its false epithet. The themes are interrelated. The classicist, Kathryn Morgan, suggested there may have been some cultural alienation in our possible lack of understanding of the term 'myth', that what we mean and what the Greeks meant when they used the term myth (*mythos*).³⁸ In the end whether it is a problem of interpretation or misunderstanding the term 'myth' the consensus is that the term *mythos* arose from within a Greek context. The next two sections concentrate on this theme. The final section tests out the issues within an ancient Egyptian context.

4.5 The Problem of Language: *Mythologia*, *Mythos* and *Logos*

Eliade is one of many scholars who allude to the Greek origins of the term 'myth', how and why it arises within the Greek world.³⁹ '[T]he Greeks steadily continued to empty *mythos* of all religious and metaphysical values. Contrasted both with *logos* and, later, with *historia*, *mythos* came in the end to denote "what cannot really exist"'.⁴⁰ First, given that the Greeks are said to have denuded all religious and metaphysical values from myths suggests that these elements were previously incorporated within the ethos of *mythos*.

³⁸ K.A. Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy from Presocratics to Plato*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 15. See also 'what we mean' in the definition of *mythos* in *The Chambers Dictionary*, 1115: 'myth; mythology; theme; scheme of events; the characteristic or current attitudes of a culture or group, expressed symbolically (through poetry, art, drama, etc)'. There is some difference in the way 'myth' is defined: 'an ancient traditional story of gods and heroes, *esp.*, one offering an explanation of some fact or phenomena; a story with a veiled meaning; mythical matter; a figment; a commonly held belief that is untrue, or without foundation'. Of some interest is that only 'myth' is suggested as being 'untrue'. See also Barber, *When they Severed Earth*, 149. 'Earlier modes of thought using analogy could not be understood in the new cause-and-effect deductive method of gaining information, thus 'the word *myth*, originally Greek *mythos* "a traditional explanatory saying", has now become synonymous with "untruth"'.

³⁹ See Kirk, *Myth*, 7. Kirk rightly suggested that there was 'no Platonic form of myth against which all actual instances can be measured'. See also Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy*, 34. She proposed that the first major culprits in the "creation of mythology" are the Greek philosophers, 'starting with Xenophanes and ending with Plato'. 34. Wyatt commented [oral communication], that what has happened historically, is that modern discussion of 'myth' had its origin in Greek speculation. The meaning of their stories and the use of the Greek word *mythos* is only a historical starting point.

⁴⁰ Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, 1-2.

Second, if the Greeks later designated *mythos* as fiction, what were the circumstances that resulted in the change from a 'religious' concept to one that was false? This section seeks to respond only to these questions rather than to enquire into Greek philosophical concepts. The ultimate question is what were the circumstances that returned myth to its original so-called 'religious' framework. Although historically the words *mythos*, *logos*, and *mythologia*⁴¹ arose from within a Greek context, their meanings appeared to change over time, from a goddess-inspired divine authority to a state controlled authority. These changes will be examined briefly and only in relation to the transition from the *mythos* of the eighth century BCE Hesiod, next to the fifth century Pre-Socratics who re-defined *mythos* and *logos*, and finally to the *logos* of Plato.

Lincoln's theory into the changing meanings of the Greek terms *mythos* and *logos* merits a brief overview if only because of the variant interpretations of the terms discussed. He explains the history of *mythos* and *logos*, from its transformation from the poetic speech of Hesiod and Homer to the rational discourse of Plato. He proposed serious re-examination and deliberation of the *meaning* intended by the terms, *mythos* and *logos* in the Greek texts. Subtle nuances were evident in the juxtaposition of certain words by the Greeks that rendered their meanings more effective. For example, different forms of the words 'falsehoods' and 'truths' were placed into the mouths of the Muses in Hesiod's *Theogony*.⁴²

(27) We know how to recount many falsehoods like real things, and

(28) We know how to proclaim truths when we wish.⁴³

⁴¹ For an interrelated interpretation of the terms, see Claude Calame, 'The Rhetoric of Muthos and Logos', in *From Myth to Reason*, 119-143. Cf. Calame's interpretation of *mythos* as a story comes under the heading of *logos*, a discourse, or narrative whose logic is generally that of an emplotment.

⁴² The Muses were the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne, the goddess of Memory. Zeus stayed with her for nine days after which she gave birth to nine daughters, the Muses.

⁴³ Hesiod: *Theogony*, 27-28 quoted in Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 3. See also Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy*, 21. Morgan proposed that modern scholarship on Hesiod: *Theogony*, 27-38, contends that 'all poetic representation may be a "lie" to some extent' but there is no question of the truth status of myth, or of poetry, that, 'until the rise of philosophy, there was no 'mythology'. Alternatively, in M.L. West's commentary on lines 26-28 of Hesiod's *Theogony* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), he suggests that hitherto Hesiod 'had been preoccupied with false things', and now the Muses are saying that although Hesiod has been ignorant of the truth, the Muses would now reveal the truth to him. 'Admittedly, we sometimes deceive, but when we choose, we can reveal the truth, and we are going to reveal it to you', 161-163.

Thus in the two lines the goddesses were able to speak both ‘falsehood’ and ‘truths’. Line 27 describes the language used to denote ‘plausible falsehoods’. The text used the verb *legein* (to recount) that a poetic formulaic line was used for ‘skillful pieces of deception’.⁴⁴ Hesiod placed into the mouths of the Muses, the daughters of Zeus, the ability to recount ‘falsehoods like real things’. The latter term suggests deliberate deception.⁴⁵ In line 28 Hesiod gave the goddesses the power ‘to proclaim’, (*gērusasthai*), ‘truths’.⁴⁶ Significantly, the interchanging verbs discussed by Lincoln could be used alongside ‘truths’ in line 28.⁴⁷ Thus different words may stress or imply a different nuance to truth claims. Lincoln suggested a subtle difference in meaning: to use the word *mythēsaimēn* (to speak, to tell [mythos]), alongside truths, signified ‘truths’ that are told or spoken, that the *method* of telling the truth related to ‘*mythoi* and truth’.

Essentially, therefore, *mythoi* are stories; their meaning may vary depending on the verbs used alongside. Further, Lincoln proposed that when the verb ‘to proclaim’ is placed alongside ‘truths’, when ‘truths are proclaimed’, they are perhaps indicative of an authority.⁴⁸ Thus, ‘to proclaim truths’ in line 28 signified that *mythoi* were truths spoken with the authoritative voice of the goddesses.⁴⁹ Because the goddesses know truth, they are able to manipulate or select an appropriate form of ‘truth’ as a persuasive tool for a given circumstance; thus they can speak both *mythos* and *logos*.⁵⁰ In short, the meaning of the terms was signified by the verb alongside

⁴⁴ See commentary, West, *Theogony*, 163: ‘In these places the meaning is “plausible”, the sort of fiction that can be believed in’, in a different sense ‘of “probable” conjecture or opinion’. See also, Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, he points to the same formulaic line used by Odysseus’s most skillful (and morally problematic) pieces of deliberate deception, 4.

⁴⁵ Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 218,n.3. Lincoln refers to the only other reference to the same formula in *Odyssey*, 19, 203, in which the god Odysseus deceives his wife.

⁴⁶ Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 3-4.

⁴⁷ Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 4. For Lincoln, the only sources in which these two verbs appear are in *Theogony*, 27-28, and *Works and Days*, 10. The interchanging verbs discussed by Lincoln are *mythēsaimēn* (to speak, to tell), or the word used by modern editors, *gērusasthai*, (to proclaim).

⁴⁸ Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, ‘divine proclamation of truth’, 218,n.4.

⁴⁹ This is similar to the Egyptian ritual when the term, ‘*dd mdw*’, is followed by the name of a deity, the latter signifies divine authority.

⁵⁰ On other interpretations of the enigmatic lines 27-28, see J. Clay, *Hesiod’s Cosmos*, (New York; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 58-60. See also comment by Arrighetti (1996), 54, quoted in Clay, 58,n.43: ‘If we do not establish a precise reference, *outside of Hesiod’s work*, for *Theogony* 27, we must then accept as a fundamental presupposition for any interpretation of his work that it is impossible for him to escape from a condition of uncertainty between falsehood and truth, since the Muses can inspire the one as well as the other’.

either *mythos* or *logos*; the terms in themselves indicate an account, to tell or relate an event. The words themselves are neutral. Similarly, the authority is signified by the person who recites the *mythos* or *logos*.

Lincoln's intention was not to suggest the appropriateness or otherwise of one particular interpretation over the other, rather, to draw attention to the variance and adaptation of language. Nonetheless, while manipulating the meaning and intention of the language, and Lincoln suggested it was deliberate, the Greeks sought to reconcile more effectively the multivalent contrast between true speech and what appears as deception.⁵¹ The term *logos* according to Lincoln, was used by Hesiod only five times. Other than on one occasion, it always appeared in the plural, *logoi*; sometimes modified by the adjective 'seductive', other times placed alongside *pseudea* ('falsehoods'). Thus the term *logoi* is associated with 'falsehoods', disputes, and quarrels, language which suggested 'verbal forms of conflict, in which women excel'.⁵²

Moreover, in Hesiod's *Theogony* Lincoln offers as an example in line 229, that 'Quarrels and Falsehoods and *Logoi* and Disputes' is gender-based in that the lines inferred the verbal conflicts of women; and the preceding line 228 describes the physical battles of men: 'Combats and Battles and Murders and Manslaughters'. In the poetic works of Hesiod, Lincoln's theory is that the terms *mythos* and *logos* are not only gender-based, they relate also to an interchangeable relationship between the true and the false, male and female. It seems that the Greeks, like most cultures manipulated aspects of language to convey truth claims.⁵³

Of some importance is the reverse meaning attributed to the terms *mythos* and *logos* today; *mythos* as 'false', *logos* as the 'Word' in the Christian concept of divine

⁵¹ See commentary, West, *Theogony*, 161,n.2, 26-28. Cf. 'Admittedly, we sometimes deceive; but when we choose, we can reveal the truth, and we are going to reveal it to you', 162. Also a different form of truth: 'the meaning of "plausible", in the sense of the sort of fiction that can be believed in. In a different sense, of "probable" conjecture or opinion, 163. See also Raffaele Pettazzoni, 'The Truth of Myth', 98, in *Sacred Narrative*, 98-109. Pettazzoni asked, 'Or is there a kind of double standard of truth?'.

⁵² Lincoln, 5. See also West's translation of Hesiod's *Theogony* 226-229, 20.

⁵³ A similar use of language is employed in the *Poem of Pentaur*, supposedly 'authorised' by the Egyptian king, Rameses II describing the account of the Battle of Kadesh. Scholars often refer to this poem as 'propaganda', but from the point of view of Egyptian kingship, it was considered a truism of the power of kingship. For the *Poem of Pentaur*, see Lichtheim, *AEL* 2:62-72.

creation.⁵⁴ What circumstances caused this significant reversal of meaning? What were the factors, if any, that provoked the revolutionary change in meaning in the application of *mythos* and *logos*? The next section continues the theme of the problem of language but in the context of change.

4.6 The Problem of Change: *Mythos* and *Logos*

By the fifth century BCE, power had changed from a goddess-inspired authority not to a religion-centred but to a state-dominated, elite authority. The word *mythos* was gradually transformed. Earlier when in juxtaposition with key verbal forms, *mythos* was associated with truth and authoritative speech.⁵⁵ The conditional presence of the goddess who enabled poets to speak their ‘truths’ was discarded; *mythos* became ‘connected with the traditional tales, stories (myths) that were the vehicles of authoritative *social conventions*’⁵⁶ (my emphasis). Similarly, *logos* in conjunction with certain verbal forms, was earlier interpreted as the persuasive, seductive, *false* speech generally associated with women. Later, the term was associated with the authoritative male voice of *logos*, the ‘false’ epithet discarded, the persuasive element retained. Rather than a change in the meaning of the word *logos* itself, the context in which the word was framed signified the change from a goddess authority to the nuance of the secular male authority.

The words *mythos* and *logos* seem bound within an intricate language relationship between knowledge that was power, and its linguistic expression. Why did the Greeks yield to the apparent reversal of the terms *mythos* and *logos*? The transition seemed convoluted and complex, yet the changing application of these terms seemed nothing more or less than a linguistic attempt to re-validate the words in order to justify the Ideal State in a new social order.⁵⁷ *Logoi* retained the poetic, persuasive quality of words and were used towards rational argumentation rather than narrative discourse. *Mythos*, from its earlier meaning of authoritative speech,

⁵⁴ See Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 4. See also Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy*, 17. ‘Since *mythos* does not at first have the same implications as does our modern use of the word “myth”’.

⁵⁵ Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy*, 52.

⁵⁶ Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy*, 46.

⁵⁷ See Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), 305. He phrases it differently: ‘What does change as soon as philosophy appears on the scene is perspective and verbalization, the kind of questions asked’.

was relegated, in part, to the stories mothers tell their children.⁵⁸ *Mythoi* were denuded not only of any links to the goddess and divine authority,⁵⁹ but also to any disreputable acts of the deities, the fighting and plotting among the gods.⁶⁰ Given that all societies are dynamic, subject to change in line with new truth claims proposed by new social orders, the terms *mythos* and *logos* proved no exception. The socio-political aspect of both *mythos* and *logos* appear to challenge any religious context, but first, the Pre-Socratics demonstrated a gradual process of change in the function of *mythos*.

4.6.1 The Pre-Socratic Xenophanes

First the Pre-Socratic Xenophanes did not reject all poetry, only that which *undermined* the institutions and functions of the state; marriage, family, law, commerce, the polis. He sought only civil order and the stability of the state. He rejected stories that were detrimental to the gods, stories that gave them human frailties of ‘stealing, committing adultery, and deceiving each other’.⁶¹ Some importance was placed on the pedagogy of *mythos*, not only to encourage the morality of Greek citizens but also to promote the benefits to society as a whole. Xenophanes suggested that men should not sing of the battles of the gods but should instead ‘hymn god with pure words and auspicious *mythoi*’.⁶² Thus the function of *mythos* changed; it was not only associated with the well-being of the state but also the ideology of the gods as an exemplar of human behaviour.

⁵⁸ See ed., Scott Buchanan, ‘Republic II’, 352-354, in *The Portable Plato*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977). Socrates: ‘... we begin by telling children stories which, though not wholly destitute of the truth, are in the main fictitious ...’, 352. ‘Then the first thing will be to establish a censorship of the writers of fiction, and let the censors receive any tale of fiction which is good, and reject the bad; and we will desire mothers and nurses to tell their children the authorised ones only’, 353. It was not that Socrates expounded that *mythoi* were untrue, rather the fighting and plotting between the gods was not an accurate portrayal, ‘for they are not true’, 354.

⁵⁹ Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy*, 46. She stated: ‘Presocratics reject the world of poetic mythologising’.

⁶⁰ Buchanan, ‘Republic II’, 353-354. For Socrates, State censorship was required because certain works of Homer and Hesiod were considered by Socrates as a ‘lie’. He elaborated on the meaning of ‘lie’; whenever an ‘erroneous representation is made of the nature of gods and heroes...’. In other words, certain deeds of the gods are no longer considered suitable exemplars for the well-being of the State.

⁶¹ Xenophanes, Fragment B 11, quoted in Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 26. See also Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 309.

⁶² BI.14 quoted in Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy*, 48. See also Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 29.

The concept of the term *mythos* used as authoritative speech was not abandoned at this time, although its implication, like *logos*, was changed by the critique to which it was subjected. Morgan explained: 'Xenophanes composes a new poetry divested of its roots in revelation and Muse-based inspiration and repudiates the poetic tendency to tell illogical and harmful tales'.⁶³ Thus the term *mythos* became fragmented, selected portions were retained, others were rejected; the polarity between the use of the terms *mythos* and *logos* continued but in different forms. The goddess-inspired narrative truth of the poets was now in dispute, divine knowledge and questionable truths were challenged by Xenophanes. The break with the traditional form of *mythos* was accomplished 'and it was never refuted'.⁶⁴ The deconstruction of the goddess-inspired poetic authority was also complete, replaced by a very different authority; one which challenged the traditional truth claims.

4.6.2 The Pre-Socratic Parmenides

Next, Parmenides was a Pre-Socratic who experienced a goddess-inspired revelation; she 'showed him two paths one identified with divine truth, (is), the other with non-truth, (is not) the opinions of mortals'.⁶⁵ Divine truth (is) now relates to *logos*, earlier associated with persuasive speech and 'falsehood', a style of *logos* now in the context of conscious argumentation. The second path, (is not), the opinions of mortals cannot be the subject of any enquiry, because of the inadequacy of mortals to know the truth.⁶⁶ The meta-language of 'what is' and 'what is not' may be analogous to the language of the goddess who was able to speak both truth and falsehood as

⁶³ Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy*, 51. See also Morgan's detailed account of Xenophanes which is outwith the framework of this section; it concerns the morality and form of the gods portrayed, their likeness to mortals, as well as the conditional truth claims made by the poets, 47-53.

⁶⁴ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 309.

⁶⁵ Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy*, 68. From a difference perspective, Morgan contends: 'Mental activity and speech here claim a strong ontological activity, both because they exist in themselves and because they are inescapably bound to existence (if we cannot think it or speak it, it is not)', 70. This is similar to the ancient Egyptian concept of 'existence' and 'non-existence' discussed earlier, that the creative action of speech 'is' further extended, to that of writing, drawing or modelling. To eliminate someone into the realms of non-existence, or 'is not', is simply to erase their name.

⁶⁶ On the thesis that 'Being is' and 'Not-Being is not', see Walter Burkert, 'The Logic of Cosmogony', 105.

truth, yet she can distinguish between both.⁶⁷ The new truth claim discards this type of knowledge; *logos* is the new 'divine' truth.

The epic verse of Parmenides associates the concept of divine 'truth' with revelation through *mythos*. Thus the divine *logos* was revealed through the *mythos* of the human being; Parmenides was the mortal *vehicle* through which the divine revelations were spoken.⁶⁸ As a mortal he was unable to know the truth. The divine revelatory concept was reminiscent of Van der Leeuw's belief discussed in chapter two, that divine understanding was revealed only by God; similarly, the manifestation of the sacred and *homo religiosus*. However, the source of the revelation of Parmenides through *mythos*, rather than the *logos*, appears different to the later concept of *logos* as the Word of God. Nonetheless, it was similar to van der Leeuw's objective-subjective approach that signified his human-centred approach to revelation. Yet, both van der Leeuw and Kristensen denied that their sacred story was *mythos*. The final stage in the *mythos-logos* transformation is identified with the Pre-Socratic, Heraclitus.

4.6.3 The Pre-Socratic Heraclitus

Heraclitus was an aristocratic elitist who rejected any association with the term *mythos*. Divine revelations in the form of *mythoi*, previously experienced through Parmenides, were no longer associated with 'truth' claims: the rejection of *mythos* was the reinstatement of *logos* as authoritative speech. Poetry was relegated to the masses, as the language of the common people; its former designation as *logos* became a new elitist version of *logos*. Its meaning had veered from the language of the poetic persuasive speech to a discourse of written prose. *Logos* was no longer considered a narrative recited to the people, validated through the goddess inspiration

⁶⁷ Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy*, 75. On Hesiod's attributes of past, present and future knowledge to the Muses, see Clay, *Hesiod's Cosmos*, 175. See also Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 30: 'Come, I [the goddess] will speak, and having heard my *mythos*, you will carry it away'. See also Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 310, and his comment: 'Thus mythical and philosophical cosmogony are seen to interpenetrate more than before, yet only in this form of deceptive speech'.

⁶⁸ Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 31. See also Empedocles, Fragment B 23.9-11. Empedocles, another Pre-Socratic thinker, a poet, physician and prophet also invoked the Muse for inspiration. However, only after the *logos* of the goddess was placed in the visceral organs of the poet, did metamorphosis occur; the *logos*, earlier associated with false, seductive and beguiling language, was transfigured into the authoritative *mythos*. See Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy*, 61-62.

or revelation. Instead the new cultural male elite appropriated the term *logos* under the rubric of dialectic discussion and argumentation.

Where earlier Parmenides had received a revelation, now Heraclitus appeared as the authoritative voice of the new elite, one that advocated rule by a few good men on behalf of the majority of citizens who lacked good judgement and intelligence.⁶⁹ The 'common man', according to Heraclitus, required guidance because 'the masses are bad'; they had no understanding or intellect.⁷⁰ The *mythos* attributed earlier to the mortal being by Parmenides is re-formed by Heraclitus as the *mythos* of the 'common man'.

Rather than a sudden change, the transition, although gradual, changed the earlier applications of *mythos* and *logos*; the narratives of the Pre-Socratics encapsulated cultural conventions. The Pre-Socratics, whose 'scientific' criterion was truth or falsity, did not expunge the language of *mythos* from their philosophical enquiry. Their procedure was more subtle. Rather than progressing from *mythos* to *logos*, the Pre-Socratics retained and reconfigured elements of *mythos*.⁷¹ The disdain towards the common man because of his apparent inability to know the truth appeared to begin with Parmenides, continued with Heraclitus and on into the fifth century. The goddess-inspired poetic authority was suppressed and replaced with an elitist, dialectic search for logical truth. In the end, the often quoted Fragment 25 attributed to Euripides or the Sophist Critias, a cousin of Plato, echoed the elitist claims. The text urged not only for state imposed laws which would ensure public morality but also for the creation of a god who would impose fear on the common man.

4.6.4 Fragment 25: Euripides or the Sophist Critias

The author of this text believed that the common people would do acts of violence in secret and, to thwart their actions, shrewdness and wisdom were required by the state. A god, his immortality stressed, was invented by the author to instil fear

⁶⁹ Cf. Burkett, *Greek Religion*, 305. He uses the term religion, that it 'becomes a matter of the theories and thoughts of individual men who express themselves in writing, in forms of books addressed to a nascent reading public'.

⁷⁰ See Heraclitus, Fragments B39, 104, 'the masses are bad, the good are few', quoted in Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 27,n.15. See also Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy*, 55.

⁷¹ Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy*, 88.

into the people, fear that would induce them to comply with the laws imposed by the state. Moreover, should the people in secret 'do, or say or think anything not in accordance with the state', because the gods were aware of all human actions, any secrecy was futile. The state not only became the new instrument of law to maintain the new social order, it became also the codex for public morality. Burkert pointed out that where in the past the people had followed the ways of the gods, they were now obliged to conform to the rigours of the state. Burkert explained:

This involves restraint of individual wishes, knowing integration, recognition even of destruction... Who could still say that the divine cares for man, for the individual man? Here a wound was opened in practical religion which would never close again.⁷²

The final transformation appeared complete; *mythoi* were replaced by *logoi*, although Plato proposed that not all *mythoi* should be rejected: some eschatological elements of 'truth' remained valid. The gods served a purpose, and to this end some aspects of *mythoi* were commandeered by the new elite to serve the new morality necessary for the common people. The new elite called themselves Philosophers, 'lovers of wisdom', in contrast with the previous elite group, the Sophists, 'the wise'.

This section first introduced Lincoln's language-oriented theory of power; *mythos* and *logos* when in juxtaposition with certain verbs defined the divine-inspired authoritative source. The latter is rejected; the words now in juxtaposition with the term *logos* to designate knowledge and power are the fear-induced words of compliance to state laws. Given Segal's theory of myth, that the laws a society were expected to believe were established long ago by revered ancestors, this was not the case in the new Greek social order. Rather than *mythos*, the new truth was *logos*, now in juxtaposition with the authority of the institution of the state to maintain an ordered society.

The term *mythos* was now associated with divine truths that could not be proven by philosophical argument, such stories, for example, that mothers may tell to their children. In consideration that *mythos* concerned stories about superhuman beings, it is therefore an untenable statement to say that the Greeks denuded the term *mythos* of all 'religious' or metaphysical values. Suffice to say that the final re-examination of the term 'myth' concludes not only with the Platonic concept of the

⁷² Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 311.

term *mythos*; it also links to the question, did *mythos* in the end denote ‘what really cannot exist’?

4.6.5 Plato: the Rational Atheist or Wise Dialectic

Plato resisted poets and the poetry, which he called *logos*; he believed that the poets manipulated audiences by stimulating emotion. It may be said that *logos* described words which are persuasive. Similarly, the play attributed to either Euripides or Critias discussed earlier, introduced state monopoly of moral values and the concept of ‘false *logoi*’. This play reflected much of Plato’s concept of *logos* and the enforcement of state law in new theological beliefs. Plato propounded that the ‘majority of men subscribe to practical atheism’ and to this end, it was necessary for the morality of the people to be persuaded by the ‘new truth’ of the state.⁷³ Rather than divine-centred, the new social order under the rubric of *logos* was now a male-elite, state-controlled institution; belief in the gods was proclaimed a duty; atheism becomes a crime punishable by death.⁷⁴

Moreover, in Plato’s concept of the Ideal State, he proposed that the young should be educated first with the censored, fictitious stories named as the *mythoi* of Hesiod and Homer, the derogatory statements attributed to the nature and exploits of the gods. The deeds of the gods which emulated the adverse qualities of humans were removed. Only then could nurses and mothers tell the state-authorised versions to the young.⁷⁵ Similarly, Plato recognised that the *mythoi* of the poets had some value worthy of retaining for the purpose of the state although the divine nature of the gods could not achieve the kind of certainty towards which philosophical enquiry aspires. If only the adverse human behaviour attributed to the gods was discarded as a false description of the gods, then the divine element associated with either *mythos* or *logos* is not fully rejected by Plato.

Plato suggests that the divine aspects of *mythos* may serve as an indoctrination tool that the State, as the ultimate authority, is called on not only to supervise the poets, the makers-of-*mythoi*, but also to approve of what was and what

⁷³ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 319.

⁷⁴ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 333. Burkert referred to the ‘terrible severity’ of Plato’s state controlled religion.

⁷⁵ See previous 58.

was not appropriate for the well-being of the state and its citizens. The state was content to foster certain beliefs that were both probable and useful. Thus the term *mythos* was not stripped of its superhuman beings; rather, 'divine' authority now came under the auspices of State authority. Censorship of poetry declared by the state was important because of its appeal to the emotional and unreasoning part of the baser forms of humanity; women and children were included in this category. The poets, once the goddess-inspired authority, were demoted, became servants of the state, not only subordinate to the new elite but also relegated to the lower strata of humanity alongside women and children. This is the group to which the State-authorised version of *mythos* was aimed, denuded of adverse aspects of the gods which may influence the young.

Thus the divine authority earlier associated with *mythos* is now transformed as the power of the state, and *mythos* is translated as stories that are told to the lower echelons of society. Truth or falsity of *mythos* seemed not an issue; these stories need not be true as long as they express acceptable ethics for the well-being of the state.⁷⁶ In the end, the divine status in *mythos* or *logos* was not an issue *per se*; the divine presence persisted, in part.

Whether or not the term *mythos* denoted 'what really cannot exist' seems an invalid question if the Greek philosophers manipulated not only the parameters of meaning but also its validity. There is little doubt that *mythos* was denuded of all reference to the negative nature and exploits of the gods. Nonetheless, the divine aspect was retained as a tool of fear to manipulate the populace. Both *mythos* and *logos* were considered false in various degrees in that the context was determined by the philosophers. Nonetheless, the meaning of *mythos* as a word was never designated as a story that was 'false'. It was not that Socrates, in Plato's *Republic II*, expounded that *mythoi* were untrue, rather he protested against the fighting and plotting between the gods, This was not an accurate portrayal, 'for they are not true'.⁷⁷ For Plato, the key focus appeared to be the well-being of the State and the ethics required to maintain an ordered society, thus it was important that the 'founders of a State' ought to know what forms of theology are acceptable to its citizens. The question is, are the words of Socrates a reflection of the beliefs of Plato

⁷⁶ See Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy*, 163.

⁷⁷ Buchanan, 'Republic II', 354.

or are they ethical statements for the benefit for the State: 'God is always to be presented as he truly is'.⁷⁸ In the end, Glaucan asks the crucial question pertinent to the dichotomy of the true-false' nature of *mythos*: 'Then the superhuman and divine is absolutely incapable of falsehood?' Socrates replies: 'Yes'.⁷⁹ It must be concluded that the origins of the Greek polemic of the 'false' epithet of 'myth' appears unfounded, although further research is required.

Morgan was blunt in her comment that myth served its own ends, that the incorporation of a new myth signalled the need to reformulate people's ideas and their cultural identity. The myths of the philosophers were constructed with 'the same rhetorical tools employed by generations of poets'. Morgan rightly concluded: 'Myth is one of these tools, and it is an important one'.⁸⁰ The ancient Egyptians may have followed a similar pattern.

To summarise, historically the origin of the modern term 'myth' *may* have its roots in the Greek word *mythos*. The term itself simply means 'an account', 'story', or 'narrative'. Only when in juxtaposition with certain words, *logos*, is the intended meaning defined. Thus the changing context in which *mythos* is used determines the authoritative voice and the form of the narrative. I have given examples of different types of authority, goddess-inspired or goddess revealed truths and State authority. Equally, complex changes are attributed to the authoritative meanings of the inter-related concepts of *mythos* and *logos* when later associated with words which signify different powers of elite men or the state.

Essentially the term *mythos* arose as a linguistic tool of some significance. Nonetheless, the words themselves, *mythos* and *logos*, are mere words, their changing meaning was demonstrated earlier in this chapter. Equally, the dichotomy of the true-false element was evident in the use of both *mythos* and *logos*, given that Hesiod put into the mouths of the goddess not only knowledge of how to recount falsehoods like real things but also to proclaim truths when she wished. Equally, the Sophists and Philosophers manipulated *mythos* and *logos*, transformed later into the dialectic persuasive speech of reason, where earlier *logos* had been associated with

⁷⁸ Buchanan, 'Republic II', 355.

⁷⁹ Buchanan, 'Republic II', 362.

⁸⁰ Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy*, 2.

the words 'false' and 'persuasive speech'.⁸¹ The latter was the context in which the *mythos* was understood.

Given that the term *mythos* is merely a word which signifies an account, it is in the context of the application of the term that distinguishes its meaning. As I understand the concept, given Plato's rhetoric, it seems not simply a case of false or true aspects of *mythos*. Following Plato, it is not that the divine characters are subjected to the theory of proof or dialectic reasoning, this is discounted since he advocates the ethics of God. Although *mythos* was stripped of its divine authority, the form of *mythos* continued, the divine characters were retained to serve the interests of the state. Nonetheless *mythos* in itself does not constitute a story about the gods; *mythos* is the framework in which the gods or other supernatural entities, determine the context of the story, *mythos*. If at the core of the term *mythos* is the concept of authority, then the question of the truth or falseness of a story is subject to the authority of the author or speaker, the *logos*. An example is given from the Egyptian perspective.

4.7 Myths and the Egyptian perspective

Given that societies are dynamic and subject to change, the Greek and ancient Egyptian institutions of state followed similar patterns, although there were some differences. Where the early Greeks discarded their divine authorities retaining or re-creating a fear-induced divine power to invoke ethics in the 'common people' for the benefit of the state, the ancient Egyptians absorbed previous divine authorities in a syncretism of socio-political power in which the authority was the divine office of kingship.⁸² The concepts of *mythos* and *logos* appear to be present in the function of the Egyptian state although the context in which the Egyptians articulate authority is different, as are their truth claims.

For example, the Egyptian creation stories changed over time; historically they retained their creator gods as if retaining elements of their divine authority in

⁸¹ See Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy*, 7, and her comment: 'Language itself is an imperfect tool. The juxtaposition of *mythos* and *logos* keeps us aware of our human and linguistic weakness, we struggle between one and the other'.

⁸² For the power, divine status, rituals and nature of the office of kingship, see Frankfort, *Kingship*; Baines, 'Kingship, Definition of Culture, and Legitimation', 3-47, and David P. Silverman, 'The Nature of Egyptian Kingship', in David O'Connor, David P. Silverman, eds., *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*, (Leiden; New York: Köln, 1995), 50-92.

fluid truth claims. From an objective viewpoint, ancient Egyptian cosmogonies asserted simultaneous divine validation of their main cities from the Old Kingdom to the New Kingdom periods: Ptah of Memphis, Atum or Ra of Heliopolis, and Amun of Thebes. Each god claimed creator status and authoritative power of each city. Each city temple claimed political validation that their sacred space was the primeval mound of creation.⁸³ By the New Kingdom, the creator gods were merged. The period witnessed the political statement of the 'new' Theban creator god Amun; the scribes depicted Amun with the 'local' creator gods of Ra, Ptah, Atum, and Thoth; they incorporated the body of Amun in a syncretism of divine power.⁸⁴ Further, in the Hymn to Amun, the text proclaimed syncretism of three gods as one: 'Amun, Re and Ptah'.⁸⁵ In one sense the ancient Egyptians appeared to retain aspects of their deities not only as a form of divine authority but also as a force to maintain order and stability in the state of Egypt. In the Greek state, certain aspects of the stories about their gods were discarded because their presence risked the order and ethical status they required of their citizens.

Moreover, certain key Egyptian cities were united for eternity; Thebes, Heliopolis, Hermopolis and Memphis were now under the auspices of a superpower. The conjoined metapower of the divine creator, the state god Amun, in syncretism with the previous state god Ra, was now validated as Amun-Ra, the 'new' state authority in conjunction with the office of kingship. In the New Kingdom the city of Thebes became the new power centre in a new social order.⁸⁶ Leonard Lesko suggested that the creation of a 'national mythology which sought to include almost every [local] god and thereby to satisfy almost every person... was a product of

⁸³ See Wyatt, *Space and Time*, 57, 62. He contends: 'In a pre-philosophical world, it [a cosmogonic truth claim] amounted to an absolute truth claim. Egypt appears to have tolerated a number of such "truth claims"'.

⁸⁴ Pritchard, *ANET*, 365-369, esp., *A Hymn to Amon-Re, A Universalist Hymn to the Sun [Amun]*, and *Amun as Sole God*.

⁸⁵ Pritchard, *ANET*, 369. See also Hornung, *Conception*, 219 and Adolf Erman, ed., *The Ancient Egyptians*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 282-288. The syncretism of three gods as one: he was the hidden god Amun, his face was the sun-god, Ra and his body was the creator god, Ptah. On one of the trumpets from the tomb of Tutankhamun Amun is depicted as the highest of the three gods, holding out the ankh to the nose of Tutankhamun. Behind Amun stands Ra and behind the king is Ptah. See also Bunson, *Dictionary*, 20. It is important to note that although syncretism is true of Egyptian deities, the word 'syncretism' is a debated word among scholars and is not necessary true of religion elsewhere.

⁸⁶ Leonard H. Lesko, 'Ancient Egyptian Cosmogonies and Cosmologies', 104, in *Religion in Ancient Egypt*, 88-122.

genius'.⁸⁷ The earlier creator gods such as Ptah and Atum *appeared* as if they had been demoted, although the Egyptian narratives confirmed that the divine syncretism was as much to do with the collaboration of divine power as well as the political syncretism of the key Egyptian cities.

Following Lesko, Kemp acknowledged that the pre-eminence of the presence of the gods in the New Kingdom was a result of deliberate theological emphasis. Their narratives, I suggest, in the Greek sense of the complementary concepts *logos* and *mythos*, were legitimizing tools for Egypt's socio-political stability.⁸⁸ Lesko offers a similar proposal, that Egyptian texts may have been manipulated for political reasons. Many Egyptian cosmological and cosmogonical variations were 'assimilated, integrated, and interwoven by skilled persons who knew what they were doing'.⁸⁹ Later he proposed that if not the king, then priest-scribes authored the religious texts. Baines agrees on the public status of the king, that in 'public terms, the king was more important than the gods'.⁹⁰ A more trusting view is held by Frankfort who suggested that the divine presence reflected the trust which the people put into their kings: '[T]heir trust was that Pharaoh should wield to the full the absolute power to which his divinity entitled him – as nothing else could – to ensure the well-being of the whole community'.⁹¹

From the insider view, the ancient Egyptians believed that all their creation stories were 'true', that they followed their fundamental truth claim; what is written 'comes into existence'. Conversely, like language, truth was dynamic. The Egyptians believed that in erasing the texts, the 'truth' as they saw it was rendered non-existent. Questions asked of these texts, whether they are true or false, would seem invalid to

⁸⁷ Lesko, 'Cosmogonies', 90. Lesko comments further that many versions of the Heliopolitan creation myth, (CT600; CT76) can be reconstructed from allusions found in texts from various periods, all of which begin with Atum, who was the chief god of Heliopolis, 92-95. There is some inference that the androgynous Atum was the earlier creator, rather than the sun god, Ra whose prominence was first observed in the fourth and fifth dynasties. See also Pritchard, ANET for various creation myths: Atum of Heliopolis, Ptah of Memphis, Thoth of Hermopolis. See also Wyatt, *Space and Time*, 57-63, and his reference to, and comments on, the creation myths of Atum, Ptah, and Thoth; Frankfort, *Intellectual Adventure*, 54-61.

⁸⁸ Kemp, *Ancient Egypt*, 198. On syncretism, see also Frankfort, *Kingship*, 160-161: 'by substituting the deity Amun-Re for Re... was a truly creative thought which realised the potentials of a combination of the concept of the creator-sun with that of Amun ...'.

⁸⁹ Lesko, 'Cosmogonies', 90-91.

⁹⁰ Baines, 'Origins of Egyptian Kingship', 96, in *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*, 95-156.

⁹¹ Henri Frankfort, *The Birth of Civilisation*, (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956), 24.

the ancient Egyptians given their concepts of existence and non-existence. For example, their truth claims may be written down, and erased by later kings or priest-scribes, determined and validated by the power and authority of a particular king or his priesthood.⁹²

To evaluate from the objective scholarly point of view, from the outside, the Egyptian creation stories are often regarded today as 'myth', often with the negative connotation of 'false'. Conversely, when the word is changed and a society's narrative or story is described as 'sacred', there is no allusion to its falseness. Equally, rather than the narrative assigned as 'myth', the problem may be one of convention: language, like the word 'myth', are such conventions. Morgan suggested that this conventional view must be challenged and transformed, but what would be the consequences?⁹³ It may be that the word 'myth' requires to be modified if only because of the considerable baggage carried by persistent false connotations.

In the end, the changing concepts of the ancient Egyptian creation stories or so-called 'myths' may be considered like those of the Greeks, to be a functional tool in a new social order that signalled what appeared as a change in authority. Where similarities have been shown in the ancient Egyptians' concept of changing cosmogonies, their intention was not to discard previous authorities but to absorb them into a new social order which in turn incorporated a 'new' creator. It seemed not a question of fitting into a universal definition of 'myth'; rather, the ancient Egyptian concept of 'myth', if they had one, was a linguistic tool that was neither

⁹² For the erasing of texts from temple walls, see Erik Hornung, *History of Ancient Egypt*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 100-104. The so-called revolutionary king, Amenhotep IV, first sought his new capital Amarna. Next he changed his name to Akhenaten and then proceeded to erase the name of the state god Amun; it was subsequently replaced by the new god Aten. Akhenaten, in eradicating the past, caused the god Amun to cease to exist. 'Gangs of iconoclasts swarmed throughout the land ... and whenever they encountered the name of Amun, they applied their chisels, even on the tips of obelisks, underneath the gilding of columns, and in archived letters written in cuneiform'. The names of other gods were erased as well as the word 'god'. When Tutankhamun became king he issued his Restoration Decree, reinstating the names of the old gods in the temples. Thus the names of the traditional gods were erased by Akhenaten, the gods became 'non-existent'. When Tutankhamun became king, the names of the gods were 're-written', and thus reborn. Ancient Egypt demonstrated not only fluid truth claims, each version of which was given royal validation, but also indicated was the importance of their naming ritual. See also Bell, 'New Kingdom Divine Temple'. Bell gives illustrations of the temple reliefs defaced under Akhenaten and subsequently restored, for example: 141.Fig.48; 143.Fig.50; 146.Fig.53.

⁹³ Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy*, 52.

true nor false but simply ‘existed’ to maintain societal stability. As such it appears similar to the functional role of *mythos* and *logos* in Plato’s Ideal State.

Finally, there is one important power difference. Where the elite of the Greek state acted as the authoritative power to manipulate the meanings of *mythos* and *logos*, whether fear-induced beliefs in the gods or selected ethical-inspired attributes of the gods, in Egypt the office of divine kingship was the ultimate authority; the king combined both mortal and divine elements. Both cultures signified a political status of power and as such designated their concepts of true-false, existent-nonexistent: the Greeks used divine power to control the citizens of Greece; Egyptian kingship was the liaison between the gods and the Egyptian populace. Given that both cultures aimed at maintaining societal order, only their methods demonstrated cultural differences.

From an objective view the difference is slight. A subjective view demonstrates that differences indicate clear socio-political beliefs rather than ‘religious’ beliefs. In both cultures, depending on its application and function, *mythos* and *logos* appear as the unifying force of stability and order depending on the context of the narrative. The application of the terms appears to reflect the socio-cultural beliefs of both Greece and Egypt. However, both terms, *mythos* and *logos* and by default, the term ‘religion’, are absent in Egyptian narratives.

4.8 Summary

If the word *mythos*, from which the modern term ‘myth’ is considered a derivative, that it is merely a word, then its meaning is derived from the context in which the word appears in texts, whatever the genre of such texts. Therefore to classify the modern term ‘myth’ as a religious typology implies that the term ‘myth’ is an *exclusive* religious term. This seems contrary to the Greek concept of *mythos* which determines a distinct socio-political context where superhuman beliefs, imposed by the state, play an integral part. The functional nature of Greek *mythos* in association with *logos* appears similar contextually to the narratives of ancient Egypt in that the focus of power and authority in both cultures is the political authority of the institution of the state. Given that the socio-political office of kingship as the

institution of the state of Egypt is central to all narratives,⁹⁴ that the gods and goddesses appear in support of divine kingship, this compares favourably to the authoritative context of the Greek *mythos-logos* concept.

The problem appears to centre on the modern terms ‘myth’ and ‘religion’, whether or not ‘myth’ should continue to be classified under the phenomenological category of ‘religion’. The key question is: Are the terms ‘myth’ and ‘religion’ appropriate terms or are they false friends? Considering the traditional caveat about using ancient terms for modern notions, the terms ‘religion’ and ‘myth’ may be classified as modern terms. The Classicist, Claude Calame, a Professor of Greek language and literature commented on the problem when the modern term ‘myth’ as a universal category, is projected backwards and identified with the Greek *mythos*.

As far as *muthos* is concerned, it is now taken for granted that the term in Greek does *not* designate what myth has become in our modern encyclopaedic thought – a foundation narrative, albeit fictitious, portraying superhuman characters in a transcendent age.⁹⁵(my emphasis)

The ‘false’ epithet of myth is not an exclusive ‘religious’ claim; rather, it is open to all disciplines as well as in everyday use. The ongoing issue of ‘myth’ as false seems insurmountable.⁹⁶

In this chapter I have demonstrated that *mythos* is merely a word which signifies an account or narrative, the meaning of which is whatever its context implies. Thus if the modern term myth is defined as a narrative and the context of the narrative concerns superhuman beings, then it appears as if the word ‘myth’ is similar to *mythos* as the Greeks intended. But is it? Equally, it is reasonable to claim that neither ‘myth’ nor *mythos* may be subjected to the theory of scientific proof or dialectic reasoning. Given that myth and *mythos* are mere words that mean ‘account’ or ‘story’, should not the content or characters in context be subjected to proof? What could not be proven by dialectic means was not the word *mythos*; rather, it was the characters in the account, the gods. Given that the Greeks denuded *mythos* of its principle goddess-inspired character as the divine authority, it retained its divine

⁹⁴ The office of kingship referred throughout this thesis forms the key focus of the Case Study in chapter six.

⁹⁵ Claude Calame, ‘Rhetoric of Muthos and Logos’, 121-122.

⁹⁶ Kemp, in *Ancient Egypt*, 27, described the ideology of Egyptian kingship as the ‘myth of the state’.

characters. Rather than the word, *mythos*, it was the divine characters contained within the structure of *mythos* which served the interests of the state.

On the question of the term 'religion', it is not my intention to discuss whether or not supernatural beliefs in general are the result of faith or state-enforced dogmas; this may be a future research project. I have chosen to use the term 'beliefs' rather than the modern term 'religion' if only because as I understand it, the Greek belief system from the Hesiodic period through to the Platonic era incorporated a socio-political system of beliefs. Nonetheless, I posit that given the problem of the ongoing issue, the relationship between the phenomenological term 'myth' and the typology of religion may be designated as an incompatible alliance. My research in this chapter indicates that my issue topic is not exclusively with the term 'myth' *per se* given that the Greeks did not designate the word false to *mythos*. Rather I question whether 'religion' is the right word to describe the beliefs of ancient cultures.

Chapter Five

On 'Myth' and Phenomenology – a Reconstruction

Could this instinct stand the test of examination, or was it merely a temperamental prejudice masquerading as a reasoned principle.¹

5.1 Introduction

The history of the formation of categories by key classical phenomenologists was examined in chapter two, the significance of which was to establish the historical classification of the term 'myth' as a phenomenological typology of *religion*. The taxonomy remains essentially unchanged today despite numerous critiques from scholars in the field.² My hypothesis proposes that 'myths' provide information of socio-cultural values that may be in some degree *inclusive* of 'religious' ideals.³ My research has shown that what began as a simple question, whether 'myth' was more appropriately classified as a human-centred rather than a religion-centred typology, has gradually emerged as a phenomenological issue of some complexity. It is important therefore that an analysis of key critical texts of contemporary writers in the field and other literature that relates particularly to my thesis topic continues as an essential part of my methodology.

¹ Harrison, preface to *Themis*, vii.

² Flood *Phenomenology*, 16. He comments that there has been no development of the phenomenological method since its adaptation by Van der Leeuw within religious studies although phenomenology has moved on in other disciplines. This is not to say that scholarly debate is absent. See Satlow, 'Disappearing Categories', 17. For Satlow, category was a 'slippery' term that was distinctive to religious studies. Later he suggested categories created for comparison may have no 'independent existence', or indicate anything 'real'. 'Myth' in theory, he concluded, 'becomes whatever we say it is', 293. See also Paden, 'Universals Revisited', 282. Paden explored cross-cultural comparativism. Religion as a form of culture he suggested was contextual and therefore 'intrinsically incomparable'. Paden argued that thought, discourse and myth, constituted forms of social practice.

³ Current debate suggests that religious studies as a discipline may be better placed within the framework of humanities and social sciences rather than continuing its long association with theology. Cf. Cox, *Phenomenology of Religion*, 201-202; J.L. Cox and J. Sutcliffe, 'Religious Studies in Scotland: A Persistent Tension with Divinity', *Religion*, 36, 2006:1-28; Flood, *Phenomenology*, 1-17. According to Flood, rather than religious studies being marginalized it would be better served within the contemporary study of culture and society; Smith, *Map is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religion*, (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1978), 290; J.L. Cox, 'Separating Religion from the 'Sacred': Methodological Agnosticism and the Future of Religious Studies' in *Religion: Empirical Studies*, ed., Steven Sutcliffe, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 259-264.

In chapter three, Plutarch's Greek version of the Egyptian 'myth' of Isis and Osiris was analysed. My purpose was to establish the veracity of Plutarch's account using phenomenological comparative methods. My research showed that rather than employing Egyptian ideology, Plutarch's account of the Egyptian 'myth' of Isis and Osiris demonstrated a distinct Greek overlay. His adaptation is often referred to and quoted today by many Egyptologists as the extant version. Scholarly predilection was towards Plutarch's Greek version of the 'myth' of the Egyptian deities rather than to the evidence or lack of it in Egyptian narratives.⁴ A different perspective of the myth-religion issue introduced in chapter four focussed on the definition and interpretation of the term 'myth' by contemporary writers in the field of religion. The term 'myth' was re-examined not only in consideration of the origin, translation and interpretations of the Greek terms *mythos* and *logos*, the changing authoritative renderings of the terms, but also the resultant persistence today of the true-false dichotomy of the term 'myth'. Although other theories will be discussed later, the Greek influence appeared as the catalyst of the fictional status of the term 'myth'; a view that remains prevalent today not only in the academic study of religions but in the West generally.⁵ I have identified in chapter three what appeared as a further Greek superimposition on the authorial intent of Egyptian narratives.

Chapters three and four, therefore, illustrated what may be interpreted as a consequence of the absence of the key phenomenological premise of *epoché*; the suspension of all judgements, theories, opinions, ideas as well as the bracketing of any distinctions between the true or false.⁶ While most scholars agree that it is difficult to bracket completely our experiences and biases, nonetheless I will demonstrate that a scholarly objective approach conjoined with a subjective awareness may result in a more profound understanding; texts and iconography will

⁴ Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 108. He also quoted Plutarch, as if he was the authoritative voice that validated Osiris as the king who 'taught men agriculture' and 'gave them [Egyptians] laws and culture in general'.

⁵ See my later reference in this chapter to Penner's critique, that myth was 'false'.

⁶ Cf., Flood, *Phenomenology*, 98. Flood rightly argued that phenomenologists of religion have misunderstood *epoché*, that van der Leeuw did not intend it as a 'denial of subjective faith or belief'. See my comment in the introduction to chapter three. See also the section on van der Leeuw in chapter two and his comments on the difficulty in bracketing one's personal belief; even if one was a Buddhist or Muslim one's beliefs would colour our research.

be used as the validating referent.⁷ Rather than the core principles of phenomenology being discarded under the current weight of criticism, I aim to demonstrate that certain aspects of phenomenology have much to offer a student of religion.⁸ It is my intention to retain the cross-cultural, phenomenological method of comparing 'myths' as a universal *etic* term for analysing historical and contemporary expressions of 'myth'.⁹ This is not to say that the perspective of the adherent, the *emic* description, is negated or reduced. Both the insider (*emic*) and the outside (*etic*) approaches are necessary to attain empathic description and phenomenological understanding. Nonetheless, I propose that the phenomenological naming process may be better served if the terms 'myth' or 'sacred texts' are included within the general nomenclature of 'texts', if only because of the pejorative baggage carried today by the term 'myth'.¹⁰ To support my thesis, I will argue that to re-interpret only

⁷ See Phillip L. Tite, 'Naming or Defining?', 357. Tite is supportive of a critical-analytical approach to the insider perspective rather than a phenomenological valuation. I will argue later that a subjective approach does not necessarily entail verifiable or non-verifiable truth claims. That a scientific statement may be made on the reality of the Christian belief of the resurrection of Jesus is to miss the phenomenological premise that to a Christian their faith beliefs are 'true'.

⁸ Cf., for critiques see Hans H. Penner, 'Structure and Religion', 236, *HR*, 25, 1986:236-254. Penner wrote: 'I think it is fair to state that both the history and phenomenology of religion as we have known them since the 1940s are in serious trouble. Many scholars who read the various academic journals on religion would agree that something was wrong'. See Ezra Chitando, 'Phenomenology of Religion and the Study of African Traditional Religions', 313, *MTSR*, 17, 2005:219-316. He comments that the phenomenology of religion has lost its stature in the academic study of religion in the West. Jonathan Z. Smith, 'A Matter of Class: Taxonomies of Religion', *HTR*, 89, 1996:387-403. Smith rejects phenomenology as 'largely a blind alley', 389. Throughout his paper he challenges the concept of 'religion' as a universal taxon, particularly the division between 'world religions', and, 'Religions of Antiquity, New Religions and Religions of Traditional Peoples', 394. On the other hand, he contributes an important point with reference to William James' *The Principle of Psychology*. The work attempted to reconstruct an American 'phenomenology' since the European import was never properly translated for use in religious studies, 389, n. 11. Smith referenced this comment to Penner's essay, 'Is Phenomenology a Method for the Study of Religion?' in *BR*, 38, 1970:29-54. In my reading of this work I concluded that Penner critiqued on the whole, Husserlian principles of phenomenology rather than the European phenomenology of religion of Van der Leeuw, which was not truly Husserlian. See also Robert A. Segal, 'In Defence of Reductionism', in *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion*, ed., R. T. McCutcheon, (New York; London: Cassell, 1999), 139-163; Cox, *Phenomenology of Religion*, a seminal work that analyses diverse views of the phenomenology of religion: the Husserlian philosophical phenomenology; the Dutch School; the British School; and the North American Schools of Phenomenology.

⁹ See Jonathan Z. Smith, 'Classification', 35-6, *Guide to the Study of Religion*, 35-44. Smith succinctly illustrates the importance of naming in the classification process particularly the contemplation by Levi-Strauss of a dandelion, that in order to 'see' the dandelion, one must 'see' other plants that differ from it.

¹⁰ The term 'sacred' has also been subjected to various critiques. Cf. McCutcheon, 'Myth', 206; Penner, 'Is Phenomenology a Method', 37; Gavin Flood, 'The Phenomenology of Scripture: Patterns of Reception and Discovery behind Scriptural Reasoning', *Modern Theology*, 22, 2006:503-514. Flood identified the term scripture with sacred text. See also Smith, *Map is Not Territory*, 104-115,

the texts named 'myths' to the exclusion of other forms of 'secular' texts would be to ignore not only the inter-contextual nature of Egyptian texts but also the holistic nature of ancient Egyptian society. I intend, therefore, to include in my phenomenological comparison, different genres of Egyptian literature. My hypothesis is that as human beings, our view of being in the world is human-centred rather than religion-centred, although this is not to say that 'religion' or the belief system of a community is negated.¹¹ Nonetheless, when certain texts are isolated from their societal context, delimited within the narrow parameters of a religious context, they may fail to acknowledge the integral nature of ancient societies in general and ancient Egyptian society in particular.¹²

Given that so-called adherents of Egyptian 'religion' are unable to validate any re-interpretation of their texts because their voices have been silenced over time, I propose that the literary texts together with the visual texts of iconography act *as if* they were the authoritative voice of the ancient Egyptian writers.¹³ Further, translations and interpretations of the various textual narratives by scholars in the field of Egyptology will be included; the different interpretations of many scholars may 'shed light on' the authorial intent of the ancient scribes. Finally, there is scholarly consensus that the key terms used in this chapter, 'myth', 'religion' and 'culture', are of modern origin.¹⁴ To 'pre-date' these terms to a civilisation such as ancient Egypt, may be to impose a semantic meaning that was absent in ancient societies. Rather than leading to understanding, the premise of phenomenology, the

and the myriad of references to the category of sacred space. His comments on the sacred space of the land of Israel may equally be applied to other communities.

¹¹ See Smith, *Map is Not Territory*, 290-291, and his comment that 'religion is an inextricably human phenomenon'. See also Walter H. Capps, *Religious Studies: The Making of a Discipline*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 8-9.

¹² See Flood, *Phenomenology*, 3, and his comment that 'religion cannot be extracted from its cultural matrices'.

¹³ Given that only 1% of ancient Egyptians were literate, and validation by the 'adherents' was an important phenomenological criterion, then the belief system revealed in their texts conveys the authoritative voice of the literate, 1%. The question remains open pending further archaeological research, on whether or not the rest of the Egyptian populace followed a similar belief system. See John Baines, 'Literacy and Ancient Egyptian Society', *Man*, (NS), 18, 1983:572-99

¹⁴ See Tomoko Masuzawa, 'Culture', 70-71, *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, 70-93. Masuzawa presented many views on the relationship between religion and culture. He argued that the categories, religion and culture, are 'historically specific, fairly recent formations and our daily employment of these terms... is energizing a powerful ideology of modernity'. See also Peggy Morgan, 'The Authority of the Believers in the Study of Religions', *Diskus*, 4, 1996:1-10. She mentioned particularly the limitations of the use of the terms, 'religion', 'belief' and 'faith'.

meaning intended by the adherents may be transformed into a distorted reality.¹⁵ Therefore, I have defined 'culture' as an integral way of life that identifies a particular community or nation; the culture of ancient Egypt is the identity of the ancient Egyptians. Further, I have used the term 'socio-cultural' in order to identify the term 'culture' within a holistic society of which 'beliefs' form an integral part. In order to identify clearly the issues being critiqued, this thesis requires that I use at times the conventional terms within the context of ancient Egyptian civilisation, 'religion', 'myth' and 'culture'.

The phenomenological relationship between the terms 'religion' and 'myth' is the key issue to be examined in this chapter. Are they false friends? If so, then why? If the way we define and classify texts influences the way we read texts,¹⁶ when 'myths' are classified as religion-centred texts then we may read them with religious intent. First, I will present a selection of myth-religion issues critiqued by contemporary writers in the field of religion. Next, a critique of the phenomenological model, with focus on the phenomenological method of van der Leeuw, will be followed by a phenomenological comparison of Egyptian literature. My reason for using the framework of the phenomenological method of van der Leeuw was his observation as a scholar of the limitation of bracketing one's personal beliefs whether one's faith was Christian, Muslim, Buddhist or other. In principle, his aim was an attempt, as far as it was possible to do so, to understand the

¹⁵ See Robert A. Segal, 'All Generalizations are Bad: Postmodernism on Theories', 161, *JAAR*, 74, 2006:157-171. Segal makes a serious point on the creation of vocabularies by modern theorists. They are unaware that the language used is not part of the cultural language to which it is being applied. Our terms cannot fit exactly because they are ours, not theirs. Egyptian texts are one example. See also Smith, 'A Matter of Class', 392-393. Smith's comment is also relevant to this thesis, that words may have different meanings depending on their context. As an example, he compares the word 'religion' in the ordinary, 'descriptive' dictionaries which defines the common usage of a word with the prescriptive, *Harper-Collins Dictionary of Religion*. In the latter, classification of the word 'religion' is within the context of authoritative definitions by experts in the field. Smith quotes two definitions which are consistently held, the absence of which would negate the meaning intended by the word 'religion'. The first is, 'beliefs and practices that are related to superhuman beings', and second, 'no superhuman beings, no religion'. As I understand it, applying these definitions within the context of Egyptian texts in which the majority, in some degree, contain reference to 'superhuman beings', is indicative of a 'religion'. Where Smith is seeking to clarify the meaning of the taxon, 'religion', I argue against the 'religious' nature of Egyptian texts. Here is an example of the problem of language. Smith contends there is little evidence of interest in reduction: '[A] proposal that the language that is appropriate to one domain (the known/the familiar) may translate the language characteristic of another domain (the unknown/the unfamiliar) such as in Durkheim's exemplary reduction of the language characteristic of religion to the language characteristic of society'.

¹⁶ Fred. M. Frohock, *Sacred Texts in Religion* 33, 2003:1-21.

phenomena under scrutiny from both the subjective perspective of the adherent (*emic*) and the objective observations of the scholar (*etic*).

5.2 The Myth-Religion issue – Contemporary Critiques

5.2.1 Hans H. Penner: Myth Provides False Information

Hans H. Penner defined two primary theories of religion recently, the rationalist-intellectualist theory and the expressive-symbolist theory. 'The first holds that religion, consisting of beliefs, myths and rituals is rational and false' and he asks why 'rationalists' persist in holding 'false beliefs?'. The second claims that religion is *not* rational, that religious belief, ritual and myth are 'neither true nor false'. Penner puzzled why most religious people were 'ignorant of the fact that their religious beliefs and actions are neither true nor false'.¹⁷ He offered his own theory of religion as a 'communal system of propositional attitudes and practices that are related to superhuman agents'.¹⁸ Nancy Frankenberry clarified the meaning of 'propositional attitudes', arguing that they were not restricted to 'beliefs' in Penner's theory of semantics; they included our hopes, fears and desires.¹⁹

Penner described 'myth' as 'a story with a beginning, middle, and end, which was or is transmitted orally about the deeds of superhuman agents'. His explanation was concise: 'no story, no superhuman beings(s), no myth'. His insistence on 'myth' as an 'oral transmission', and if I understand his meaning, he appears to deny any textual transmission.²⁰ A clear ontological religion-myth relationship is evident, one that raises complex issues. One issue was the theory of religion as 'the given', a concept widespread among students of religion; the theory that religion and myth

¹⁷ Penner, 'You don't read a myth', 153-154.

¹⁸ Penner, 'You don't read a myth' 169.

¹⁹ As an example of the different theories of philosophy, meta-theory and religion, and exchanges between scholars of religion, concerning the recent publication, *Radical Interpretation in Religion*, see Nancy Frankenberry, Hans Penner, 'There needs no ghost to come from the grave to tell us this', *Religion*, 34, 2004:65-74. The latter is in response to Ivan Strenski's critique, 'Horatio and the Terminator: a review essay of *Radical Interpretation in Religion*', *Religion*, 34, 2004:53-64. Of interest to my thesis and new approach to phenomenology is Strenski's reference to Penner's 'searing critiques of functionalism and phenomenology of religion', 55. Strenski places emphasis not only on the context of a given utterance, he also challenges Penner's 'truth conditional semantics', 61-63,

²⁰ Penner, 'You don't read a myth', 169.

were non-rational, neither true nor false.²¹ He rejected not only the *theory* of religion as 'the given', but also *symbolic meaning* as a theory of interpretation of the language of superhuman beings. Of interest was Penner's use of the word 'myth' in the phrase which referred to the error of students of religion accepting, 'the myth of the given'.²² Of more importance, the phrase follows the now accepted modern use and interpretation of 'myth' meaning 'false'. This brief overview illustrates theories of a complex religion-centred approach to myth, an objective view posited by Penner, a rigorous critic of the phenomenology of religion; he neglects the subjective view of the adherent to which all students of religion will acknowledge.²³

Given that different aspects of the true-false dichotomy of 'myth' were discussed in chapter four, the theory of the validity of myth offered by Penner reiterated the question of whose authority lay behind the concept of the true-false dichotomy of the term 'myth'. If, as Penner conjectured, 'myth' is allied exclusively with 'religion' in a theoretical partnership of falseness, this concept of 'false friends' demonstrates a different nuance to my earlier comment on the false link between myth and religion. Whether or to what extent all 'myths' are structured as Penner suggested, with a beginning, middle and an end is a theory which will be tested in my Case Study. His theory that all myths are oral transmissions may prove an untenable theory in this thesis.

5.2.2 Russell T. McCutcheon: The Insider-Outside, *Emic-Etic Liaison*

McCutcheon opened the General Introduction to his book on the insider-outsider motif with a quotation which included the phrase: 'You never really

²¹ Penner, 'You don't read a myth', 170. Penner repeated his theory of 'the given', particularly the 'given' of *homo religiosus*. See also Nancy Frankenberry's comments on the many guises assumed by 'the given' in the study of religion; religious experience, the collective unconscious; subjectivity are some examples in Frankenberry, 'There's no ghost', 72. See also Penner, 'Structure and Religion', 252.

²² Penner, 'You don't read a myth', 170,

²³ See Penner, 'Is Phenomenology a Method', 29-54; Penner, 'Structure and Religion', 241-2. See also McCutcheon, 'Myth', 190. McCutcheon quoted various examples where book titles used the term 'myth', meaning 'false': Bruce Lawrence (1988), *Shattering the Myth: Islam Beyond Violence*; John Shelby Spong (1994), *Resurrection: Myth or Reality*; Naomi Wolf (1992), *The Beauty Myth*. See also McCutcheon's later comment that the label 'myth' used to distinguish false from true stories continues to live on, 193. See also Penner, 'Is phenomenology a Method', 35. He also used the term to denote falseness in his comment, '...the "collective unconscious" and the "unconscious" are "dogmas" or "myths".'

understand a person until you consider things from *his point of view*²⁴ (my emphasis). McCutcheon proposed that the insider-outsider problem was 'whether or to what extent, someone can study, *understand*, or explain the beliefs, words, or actions of another' (my emphasis). It was a problem, he suggested, faced by other disciplines who studied the 'human condition'; psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, historians, political scientists, and others. He asked whether 'such a study *could* take place at all' or, if it did, would the observer 'project his or her own desires and fears' on to the observed 'other'.²⁵ Conversely, whether or not such a study was viable would depend on the researcher's ability to empathise with another person. Nonetheless his reference to the study of the 'human condition' suggested a 'human-centred' approach.

The main critique was the difference between the study of the natural world of 'science' with the observer as an objective outsider, and the study of the meaning, intention and belief systems of the 'human being', the insider.²⁶ The insider-outsider gap was bridged by the phenomenological method of empathic description, a subjective approach by the scholarly observer whose aim was to understand the intentions and meanings of the insider.²⁷ McCutcheon presented the view that the difference was that humans are creative; they have 'a spirit', 'a consciousness', and are 'moral agents'. Their behaviour and beliefs systems therefore are unpredictable; they cannot be reduced to the same regularities or patterns as the scientific study of for example, geology, astronomy, chemistry, or physics.²⁸

²⁴ Quoted by R.T. McCutcheon, *The Insider/Outside Problem in the Study of Religion*, 1, from Harper Lee, (1982), *To Kill a Mocking Bird*, 29-30.

²⁵ McCutcheon, *Insider/Outsider*, 2. See also Flood, *Phenomenology*, 2-3. Flood also challenged the subjective approach within phenomenology with the words: 'Moccasin walking or empathy does not provide a sufficiently rigorous theoretical basis on which to build an academic discipline', 4. See also Tite, 'Naming or Defining?', 341. Tite challenged the concept of the priority and validity given to the insider view and the presumption that the veracity of the insider's claim was never called into question.

²⁶ See Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 676,n.3,4,5. He argued for a scientific approach to phenomenology using the arguments of Heidegger and Dilthey. See also Flood, *Phenomenology*, 2-3. Flood challenged the assumptions claimed by departments of religious studies that 'accurate, objective knowledge' was generated by scientific methods.

²⁷ For a detailed account of the definitions and meanings of the terms *emic* and *etic* see McCutcheon's 'Introduction', 15-22, and Kenneth L. Pike, 'Etic and Emic Standpoints for the Description of Behaviour', 28-35, in McCutcheon, ed., *The Insider/Outsider*. See also Headland *et al.*, *Emics and Etics*.

²⁸ McCutcheon, *Insider/Outsider*, 3.

A point of some importance is that the linguist, Kenneth Pike, who first coined the terms *emic* and *etic*, did not envisage a divide between the insider and outsider positions.²⁹ Rather, his intention was to describe cultural behaviour from two different standpoints, 'cross-cultural' (objective, *etic*) and 'specific' (subjective, *emic*); the results would then '*shade into one another*'³⁰ (my emphasis). The terms *emic* and *etic*, often fail to convey adequately the *emic-etic* interrelated system devised by Pike and later adopted in part, by the anthropologist, Marvin Harris and others. The terms *emic-etic* are often confused with an either-or approach, for example, subjective *versus* objective, insider *versus* outsider, which was not the intention of Pike. As a linguist, he sought first to understand the 'local' language with the intention of comparing different sounds within a universal system.

According to Harris, Pike's *emic-etic* model of languages is very different to the *emic-etic* model of human behaviour.³¹ As McCutcheon observed, the study of the unpredictable human with scientific enquiry was an enterprise. Nonetheless, the premise of Pike's *emic-etic* system was an inter-subjective relationship in which the outsider and insider considered things from their mutual points of view.

Pike describes the person who has local knowledge as an 'insider'. He or she knows how to act in a given situation without necessarily knowing in detail how to analyse his or her actions. *Emic* knowledge of a person's local culture is enriched when in contact with the *etic* outsider, because, as Pike argues, the insider seeks secure help from an outside disciplinary system. In other words, if the local person seeks to further his knowledge he must look to an outside authority. To use the *emic* behaviour or situation, the outsider observer must *act like an insider* and to analyse his or her own actions, the outsider observer must look at, or listen to material *as an outsider*. Pike explained the *emic-etic* interrelationship: 'But just as the outsider can learn to act like an insider, so the insider can learn to analyse like an outsider'.³² For Pike, the *emic-etic* system was an inter-subjective-objective system similar to van der Leeuw's objective-subjective phenomenology. As I understand Pike, the outsider

²⁹ See my brief introduction to Pike's *emic-etic* terms in chapter four, 4.4 The Problem of Truth.

³⁰ Pike, 'Etic and Emic Standpoints', 28.

³¹ Headland, *Emics and Etics*, 54

³² Headland, *Emics and Etics*, 33-34.

seeks to understand the insider, each looking to the other in a reciprocal awareness of each others 'point of view'.

One of the differences between Pike and Harris was that Pike propounds that the *emic* position should not be compromised, that a society's beliefs should be validated by the adherents of that society. Conversely, Harris contends that a 'community of observers themselves must decide' on what is, or is not, the beliefs of the community as a whole. His definitive statement reads in part: '*Etic* statements depend upon phenomenal distinctions judged appropriate by the community of Scientific Observers...' ³³ Finally, Harris describes the advantages of the *emic-etic* system and to the human race, envisaged by Pike:

Pike would personally expect that the study of *emic* local cultural differences in developed entropy patterns, and the *etic* comparison of cross-cultural differences and likenesses between them, would turn out to be very important, in the future, to our understanding of the dilemma of the human race. ³⁴

Thus further scrutiny is required whether or to what extent the statement, 'You never really *understand* a person until you consider things from *his point of view*' is appropriate to the understanding of our fellow human beings in particular, and the understanding proposed in the phenomenological method in general. I reiterate that Pike's *emic-etic* system appears very similar to van der Leeuw's subjective-objective phenomenological method, discussed later. My phenomenological approach to Egyptian narratives, also part of this chapter, may function as a theoretical test case for what is considered the insider-outsider issue. First, I now present an example of a similar inter-related insider-outside method, from the perspective of legal theory. Can the rigours of the courts of law provide a case for a viable subjective-objective or insider-outside verdict? Pike's comment echoes the relationship between the judge and the jurors: 'But just as the outsider can learn to act like an insider, so the insider can learn to analyse like an outsider'. ³⁵

³³ Headland, *Emics and Etics*, 38, 45.

³⁴ Headland, *Emics and Etics*, 38.

³⁵ Headland, *Emics and Etics*, 33-34.

5.2.3 Phenomenology, the Law, 'Beyond a Reasonable Doubt' ³⁶

It may be advantageous at this time to provide an alternate perspective not only of the insider-outsider issue but also the meaning of 'certainty', from a point of law which is human-centred. This is not to say that a belief system is absent. Jurisprudence, a descriptive term not only for the theory and philosophy of law, is also a common-law term for case law. My example concerns the jury whose duty it is to establish the validity of the facts, based on the legal phrase 'beyond a reasonable doubt'. Such a doubt is based upon reason and common sense to judge whether or not a crime has been committed. The purpose of the presence of the jury in the criminal trial is to establish the guilt or innocence of the 'defender' based upon the empirical facts presented to them by the defence lawyer and the prosecutor. The jurors on the whole lack knowledge and experience of the law. Legal guidance is given to the jury by the judge who has legal knowledge and experience.³⁷ Given that a law according to reason ought to be an 'indubitable legal phenomenon' in that 'legal knowledge starts from the axiom that everything that is not prohibited is legally permitted',³⁸ what is the case for the term 'beyond a reasonable doubt'?

The fact of meaning to a juror is a fact of human behaviour since it contains a comprehension of itself as a human being. Therefore the juror, in order to know it, actualizes this comprehension. As van der Leeuw comments: 'The essentially human always remains essentially human, and is, as such, comprehensible'.³⁹ Conversely, from a scientific perspective, in order for the lawyers to comprehend the fact they simply record it. Both views display knowledge by comprehension, but where jurors actualize the understanding into their lives, the insider view, the lawyer externalizes the comprehension by recording it, the outsider view. The intention of the jury, a random selection of the local community, is to compare the facts in order to determine the truth. The term 'beyond a reasonable doubt' traditionally interpreted as 'moral certainty' as opposed to mathematical certainty is a legal directive explained

³⁶ For the phenomenological approach see Carlos S. Cossio, 'Jurisprudence and the Sociology of Law II', *Columbia Law Review*, 55, 1952:479-501. See also Larry Laudan, 'Is Reasonable Doubt Reasonable?', *Legal Theory*, 9, 2003:295-331; Bernard Grofman, 'Modelling Juror Bias', *Legal Theory*, 5, 1999:221-234.

³⁷ As the judge (the outside authority) is to the jurors (the local insiders), Pike's view is parallel in that 'the insider seeks secure help from an outside disciplinary system'.

³⁸ Cossio, 'Jurisprudence', 482.

³⁹ Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 675.

to the jury by the presiding judge, an outsider. Given that a verdict of guilt or innocence ought to be established with the predicate of 'moral certitude', the decision of the jury implies both empirical and *ethical* understanding.⁴⁰ The jury is required also to 'swear an oath' by some sacred object, the Bible or the Koran or a similar sacred text.⁴¹ A Christian appeals to God for the truth of what is affirmed,⁴² the Muslim appeals to Allah. Different types of knowledge are displayed: human, legal, ontological, whether religious, spiritual or agnostic depending on the belief of the juror. An empathic, structural interrelationship of intuitive comprehension between the subjective insiders, the jurors and the objective legal experience of the judge, the outsider; ontological intersubjectivity forms an insider-outsider bridge.⁴³ A 'moral certainty' together with the 'sacred' oath of testimony to truth statements indicates the need for accurate knowledge of the law in order for justice to prevail.

A problem may be envisaged when the jury of twelve persons retires to consider the verdict. Each of the twelve jurors may reasonably interpret the meaning of the empirical facts from their different ontological viewpoints in their consideration of 'moral certainty'. The twelve jurors may be representative of different types of 'cultures', 'religions', 'moral standards', 'laws'.⁴⁴ In order for jurors to 'live the meaning' to obtain moral certainties, they must take it into their lives, to re-create it.⁴⁵ Although some limitation is acknowledged, the juror may labour under the illusion that he may apprehend the fact of his cognition in the same scientific manner as a physicist or a biologist (outside). Such a belief implies that the personality of an individual can be separated from one's historical background, 'but

⁴⁰ See Cossio, 'Jurisprudence', 480. Cossio states: '... truth requires not merely systematic coherence between the assertions that are predicated but also agreement between the concept and intuition'.

⁴¹ The swearing in statement by Christians: 'I swear by Almighty God that I will faithfully try the defendant and give a true verdict according to the evidence'. The Islamic Oath: 'I swear by Allah that I will faithfully try the defendant and give a true verdict according to the evidence'.

⁴² 'Ye shall not swear by my name falsely', Lev.19:12.

⁴³ See Cossio, 'Jurisprudence', 481. For Cossio, 'truth is not the work of an operative intellect, but the intellect discovery of what it is as an intersubjective unfolding'. Cossio's observation is an echo of Pike's *emic-etic* system discussed earlier in that the outsider observer must *act like an insider* and to analyse his or her own actions, the outsider observer must look at, or listen to material *as an outsider*.

⁴⁴ Different types of law may be present. The Islamic Sharia law is different to the Statute law of the English legal system which is also different to the laws of the Torah. See Cossio, 'Jurisprudence', 481. Cossio acknowledged that 'man is simultaneously history, society and culture'.

⁴⁵ See Cossio, 'Jurisprudence', 481. Cossio: '...there is a complete correspondence between what is grasped by intuition and what is lived'.

it cannot be separated from the community feelings and the meanings of its own life which are an essential part of it'.⁴⁶ Given that the verdict ought to be 'beyond reasonable doubt', how may the juror achieve 'moral certitude'? The judge and the juror are *not* two beings who exist in different worlds; rather they have an inter-subjective insider-outside role. Jurors, in order to be 'knowing' subjects, must put themselves in the place of the judge, to experience the legal knowledge from the point of view of the judge, that is to go *outside* themselves in order to experience the legal knowledge objectively.⁴⁷ *Epoché* allows the juror to bracket bias, opinions, and any previous distinctions between the true or false. In the active interaction between the judge and the juror, judge is the juror, the juror is the judge; consequently, the juror *intuitively comprehends* the principle of the 'moral certainty' of justice. Whether or to what extent all twelve members of the jury are able to fully comprehend another person's point of view in order to achieve fair and unbiased justice, a phenomenological approach of *epoché* and empathy may be considered a worthy method. Legal theory has suggested the possibility. The Other in this case may be both judge and/or the defendant who seeks justice, 'beyond a reasonable doubt'; the protagonist is the juror who seeks understanding in order to fulfil a 'sacred' oath.⁴⁸ Finally, to establish a verdict 'beyond a reasonable doubt', the twelve jurors who may have diverse ontological views, would find it necessary to test and re-appraise the empirical evidence in order to bracket any bias that may colour their decision. A similar rigorous method of scrutiny and testing of data may be identified with van der Leeuw's theory of the 'infinite need of correction'.

5.3 Phenomenology Revisited: 'Infinite Need of Correction'⁴⁹

Questions raised of the phenomenological method have resulted in intense critiques from scholars in the field of religious studies; some of these critiques have

⁴⁶ Cossio, 'Jurisprudence', 497.

⁴⁷ See Cossio, 'Jurisprudence', 480. 'Intuition, although mute and incommunicable, nevertheless is lived as knowledge'.

⁴⁸ Although Cossio, the author of 'Jurisprudence', does not use the terms *epoché* or empathy; these terms are implied, particularly in his section, The Ontological Conscription of Science in which he discusses Husserlian phenomenology. The section on 'The Egological Solution' described the role of legal ontology, 480-482.

⁴⁹ Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 695.

been mentioned earlier. Although there are many variations with little consensus of a phenomenological method,⁵⁰ one must question whether the method itself should be dismissed in its entirety because of such critiques, some of which may prove to be justified. Did the classical phenomenologists compare religions and religious phenomena on the wrong grounds? To what extent, if any, did phenomenological comparisons entail hidden Christian theological categories as universals?⁵¹ What are the resultant problems to phenomenology in general and to the term 'myth' as a typology of religion in particular?

This section responds to these critical questions. It is necessary to re-examine the phenomenological process which determined the term 'myth' as a typology of religion in order to facilitate the precise nature of issues critiqued. First I propose a re-appraisal of the classical phenomenological stages using the method of van der Leeuw as a general frame of reference. Other phenomenologists will be introduced to support or to offer alternative approaches to the general phenomenological theory although chapter two has indicated and discussed many of the key issues. Only critiques that relate to the formation of categories and the classification of 'myth' as a typology of religion will form the focus of the re-appraisal of the phenomenological method. Next, I will present an overview of the phenomenology of Egyptian literature.

5.3.1 Assign Names to the Texts: Naming, Classification, Empathy

In his *Epilegomena*, van der Leeuw outlined the five stages of his phenomenological method, although in practice he proposed that the stages should not be considered in succession, rather they should arise simultaneously.⁵² In order

⁵⁰ See Morgan, 'Authority of the Believers', 1-10. Morgan quoted various authors and different kinds of phenomenology of religion which have come under attack in various ways: C.J. Bleeker, (1963) *The Sacred Bridge*; M. Eliade, (1969), *The Quest*; W.B. Kristensen, (1960) *The Meaning of Religion*; N. Smart, (1973) *The Phenomenon of Religion*; G. Van der Leeuw, (1938) *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*. She also included a short overview of the historical development of phenomenology in E. Sharpe, (1986) *Comparative Religion: A History*, Chapter 10. Included also was reference to J.L. Cox, (1992) *Expressing The Sacred*, a study of phenomenology of religion in its historical and philosophical context which also discussed the application of phenomenological skills and criticisms of its methods. See also Cox's seminal work, *A Guide to the Phenomenology of Religion* which draws together, 'key figures, formative influences and subsequent debates' in phenomenology.

⁵¹ See Jeppe Sinding Jensen, 'Universal Terms and the Comparative Study of Religion', 238, *Numen* 48, 2001:238-266.

⁵² Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, Chapters 107-110.

for a rigorous re-appraisal of the phenomenological method to take place, I will describe van der Leeuw's system in stages, not only because the stages seem a 'complicated procedure' but also viewing the stages successively allows for a more precise re-appraisal.⁵³ Such an appraisal may benefit not only my later application of the phenomenological method to Egyptian narratives but may also ascertain whether or to what extent 'myth' is appropriately classified as a phenomenological typology of religion. For this reason, I am required to analyse with some rigour the method of classifying typologies. The assigning of names to the phenomena which 'appear' is the first stage of van der Leeuw's system. Empathy, his second stage, is not only an important factor in the subject-object inter-relationship but it also plays a key role in the naming-classification process. Thus stages one and two form an initial unity in the classification of phenomena.

According to van der Leeuw, a phenomenon is 'what appears'; because 'something exists', it 'appears' and is therefore a 'phenomenon'. Given the presence of an empathic subject-object interrelationship, it is the '*essence*' of the phenomenon that is given in its appearance to the observer-researcher. It is only when a researcher *describes* 'what appears', analyses it and gives it objective meaning that phenomenology of religion arises. Not only does van der Leeuw suggest that this type of research may be described as 'Transcendental Psychology',⁵⁴ he also proposed that an 'Ideal Type', whether 'it concerns a person, a historical situation or a religion', appears or is manifest to the researcher as an *image*; it has *no reality*. Van der Leeuw described the image, a projection of the phenomenon in the mind, as *timeless*; its meaning is both 'experienced' and 'understood' by the researcher. For the 'image' of the Ideal Type to be timeless with no reality implied a transcendental quality. Waardenburg explained the concept of 'image' in his understanding of the thinking of van der Leeuw:

The image as such is a 'symbol' of which the immediate reality coincides with another reality. So in the last analysis the religious image has a sacramental reality, and this sacramental reality has as its base Christ's becoming man, Christ's incarnation. ... In man after the

⁵³ Van der Leeuw, 677.

⁵⁴ Van der Leeuw, 673, n.1. See also the 'psychological method' in van der Leeuw's phenomenological theology in Waardenburg, 'Religion between Reality', 166.

Fall, the image of God is merely the image of the Crucified One, the figure of the servant, and this is now the image of God in man.⁵⁵

Although the phenomenological system of van der Leeuw has received considerable critiques because of what is seen as his overlay of Christian doctrines on empirical facts, further research is required, if only to attempt to 'understand' the issue from his point of view. The Ideal Type, the paradigm to which typologies of similarities were measured, may be considered the first obstacle, if as Waardenburg suggested the predicate for comparison was the Christian faith of van der Leeuw.⁵⁶ Van der Leeuw accounted for the concept of the Ideal Type as an empathic subject-object inter-relationship in which the phenomenon (the object) was apprehended and brought into the consciousness of the researcher (the subject). Before the phenomena can be described and interpreted, the appearance must be *experienced*. Even then, interpretation may not be immediate because what 'appears' is symbolic. 'It dawns on us'. The premise of van der Leeuw's phenomenological system was towards 'understanding' (*verstehen*) rather than 'explaining' the object of research; the scholar was required to allow the object to affect him, in a psychological sense. Using the principle of empathy, (*Einfühlung*) the researcher had to *make the effort* 'to let his object be "object" as little as possible', to disregard its empirical factual existence. It was not a passive enterprise; an effort was required. Intersubjectivity arises where the researcher has to 'transpose' himself into the object of research in order to re-experience it; re-construction ensued. The 'reality' was psychological rather than a spatial-temporal reality; 'it was understood from within'. In this way the 'essence' of the research object was intuited rather than rationalised.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Jacques Waardenburg, *Reflections on the Study of Religion; Including an Essay on the Work of Gerardus van der Leeuw*, (The Hague: Mouton, 1978), 212.

⁵⁶ See van der Leeuw in *Religion in Essence*, 679. Van der Leeuw commented that 'religion is the extension of life to its uttermost limit'. See also Waardenburg, 'Religion between Reality', 173. He states that van der Leeuw's concept of the essence of religion 'can only be grasped from God's point of view'.

⁵⁷ See Waardenburg, 'Religion between Reality', 163-164. It is important to note that Waardenburg made few references in this paper to the influence of van der Leeuw's Christian faith on his phenomenological method. In comparison, his later discussion on van der Leeuw in *Reflections*, 194-246, demonstrated a detailed account of his Christian influence on his phenomenology. My comment is merely to illustrate an example of the problem of literature research in general, and the key premise of van der Leeuw's concept of 'understanding' in particular. What causes the research scholar to seek more accuracy, to weigh up the 'facts', to contemplate the 'evidence' of the texts, to understand or intuit the intentions of the author, whether in this case it is either van der Leeuw or Waardenburg?

The process of 'knowing' historical religious data, alternatively a metaphysical 'knowing', cannot be separated from the phenomena themselves. The subject-object interrelationship therefore was the fundamental structure of the 'religious experience'; it was shared by the subject-object interrelationship.⁵⁸ (Subject→Structure/Ideal Type ←Object) What seemed a complicated concept was suggested by Waardenburg as a soteriological experience: 'such power [religious] could only be explained as coming from God'.⁵⁹ Given that 'religious experience' was the premise of the classification of a typology of religion, some consideration is required for its application to religions in general, if Christian concepts were the main criteria. Waardenburg suggested that van der Leeuw's intention was to describe the meaning of religion *in general* beyond the boundary of the Christian community and the Church. Given the eschatological character of each mediated experience of meaning, the *verstehen* experience was directed at a final 'ultimate meaning ... by which man is understood (by God)'. Waardenburg interpreted this concept to mean, the 'saving fact of the Incarnation'.⁶⁰

Van der Leeuw posited that researchers have no choice: the phenomena are drawn into his-her life experience because of the existence of the empathic subject-object interrelationship. "Reality" proposed van der Leeuw 'is always *my* reality, history *my* history'.⁶¹ Thus we are urged to recall our spiritual past with 'intense sympathy' [empathy] not only with our own experience but also with the experience other than our own.⁶² Van der Leeuw acknowledged there were *limits* to such an empathic experience; nonetheless 'the essentially human always remains essentially human and is, as such comprehensible'.⁶³ Thus by bringing into focus the 'religious

⁵⁸ See also Waardenburg, 'Religion Between Reality', 167. On the subject of knowing, 'Van der Leeuw alludes here to a metaphysic which is implicit in *verstehen* [understanding] in general, but specifically in *verstehen* of religious experience'.

⁵⁹ See Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*. The concept of the eternal and the timeless element of van der Leeuw's Ideal Type may be identified with the Christian doctrine of Incarnation. Similarly, the terms 'religious experience' can never be understood from the moment, it may only be understood in the 'ultimate meaning' of eternity. The 'essence' of the 'religious experience' is described by van der Leeuw as 'revelation', 462, 683. Also 'the essence of religion is to be grasped only from above, beginning with God', 679.

⁶⁰ Waardenburg, *Reflections*, 198.

⁶¹ See van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 671-674.

⁶² See van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 675.

⁶³ Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 675.

experience' that is 'human', we are able to understand what it is to be religious as a human being. Nonetheless the 'religious experience' that van der Leeuw identified as human is a reflection only of what must be seen as a Christian overlay.

Consequently, the naming and classification of empirical data, the universal commonality of Christian 'religious experience', would seem an inappropriate frame of reference for comparing other 'religions'.

5.3.2 *Epoché*, Clarification, Comprehension, Testimony

Van der Leeuw's concept of *epoché*, the third stage in his phenomenological method, not only concerned the bracketing of what lies behind the phenomena but also the concept of reality in a phenomenological sense, that it was 'neither metaphysics, nor the comprehension of empirical reality'.⁶⁴ Understanding, the fundamental objective in van der Leeuw's phenomenological method may be achieved only by bracketing everything but the phenomena itself. Bracketing or *epoché* was to suspend opinions, judgements, and to bracket distinctions between the true and the false. In van der Leeuw's words, *epoché* was 'intellectual suspense',⁶⁵ Only by contemplating what 'appears', using *epoché*, could the phenomena be given form and meaning. Burkert's comment appeared to indicate an intuitive understanding of the phenomenological method of *epoché*.

If you start to tell the tale about 'the beginning' of 'everything', you must first delete 'everything' from your mental view, i.e. our whole world of heaven and earth, sea and mountains, plants, animals, and humans: all this has to go.⁶⁶

Van der Leeuw's fourth stage emphasised the simultaneous nature of the phenomenological method. The testing and further clarification of the phenomena

⁶⁴ See Flood, *Beyond Phenomenology*, 98-99. Flood suggested that the concept of bracketing allowed the subjective religious facts to speak for themselves after which they become objective. Flood's comment on the viability of objective and value-free creations of typologies of religion is a valid observation, although van der Leeuw did comment on the limitations of *epoché*. Flood rightly contended that the *epoché* of van der Leeuw was not a denial of subjective faith. Van der Leeuw appeared to suggest that one's subjective faith was the link to understanding phenomena. Conversely, the phenomenological method argues that one's personal faith should not be allowed to *influence* the data, although van der Leeuw is one of many phenomenologists who found this concept difficult. See also Waardenburg, *Reflections*, 199. Waardenburg commented on structural relations, that 'they are not just of a formal or objective nature, but they obtain their content through the experience of faith of the author'.

⁶⁵ Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 688. He outlined only four stages.

⁶⁶ W. Burkert, 'The Logic of Cosmogony', 92, in *From Myth to Reason?*, 87-106.

was the initial objective; the grouping together of similarities and separating out into different types was the ultimate aim of the researcher. The structural relationships introduced in stages one and two were used to classify the different types of the 'ideal typical interrelation'. Although we are reminded by van der Leeuw that each stage was an integral part of the whole, the adoption of *epoché*, 'intellectual suspense' or 'a restraint from judgement' by the researcher was to ensure no extraneous data pervaded the phenomena.⁶⁷ The final stages of the van der Leeuw's phenomenological method focused on the full impact of comprehension; the structural interrelationship between the researcher and the phenomena had culminated in an intuitive understanding. Only then was 'reality' revealed. 'The empirical, ontal, or metaphysical fact becomes a datum'.⁶⁸ Given that the researcher should respect the intentionality of the phenomena, only the appearance of what was revealed may be described by the researcher. Only then does the researcher analyse it and give it objective meaning. Van der Leeuw admitted that interpretation of the material facts revealed a 'shallower' meaning than the more profound phenomenological understanding. Nonetheless, underlying the theory of van der Leeuw's phenomenological method was the fundamental principle of understanding the phenomena; only then was the researcher better qualified to describe the empirical data.

Conversely, given that van der Leeuw suggested that the scholar described 'a reconstruction', this is not to say that such a reconstruction was the 'reality' of the phenomenon. Van der Leeuw claimed that what was 'real' can be revealed only by God.⁶⁹ In the end, the drawing together of the 'religious experience', the subject-object inter-relationship, signified to van der Leeuw a man-God, faith-revelation unity. This was the framework of his Ideal type but it was an ideal which ultimately failed the test of the phenomenological principles of *epoché* and empathy; he allowed extraneous data to pervade the phenomena. Therefore, to compare the so-called

⁶⁷ See Waardenburg, 'Religion Between Reality', 171, n.111. Waardenburg suggested that van der Leeuw's meaning of the term *epoché* was unlike the Husserlian meaning. The general meaning of *epoché* intended by van der Leeuw was to understand, but it was an understanding that was particular to the subjective-objective *verstehen* relationship, in that it allowed the researcher to experience both the internal structure as well as its broader connections.

⁶⁸ Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 676. This is not to say that van der Leeuw was unfamiliar with Egyptian culture.

⁶⁹ Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 677, 684.

universal categories of 'religion' using the religion signifier of Christian revelation was to negate any comparison. Accordingly, given van der Leeuw's suggestion that all empirical data should undergo a rigorous re-appraisal and correction process, I conclude that the questions raised earlier now merit a response.

I repeat the questions I posed earlier and offer my conclusions. Questions one and two may be answered together. Did the classical phenomenologists compare religions and religious phenomena on the wrong grounds? To what extent, if any, did phenomenological comparisons entail hidden Christian theological categories as universals?⁷⁰ In chapter two I alluded to the problem of the presence of a Christian overlay in the descriptions of religious phenomena by the classical phenomenologists. Many versions of phenomenology have subsequently arisen from the classical models. The core structures of typologies, *epoché* and empathy have continued in one form or another. One of the criteria of scholarship is a clear definition of the meaning and intention of the ambiguous terms used by scholars in their particular disciplines. Baird recognised the assumption by scholars of religion that the terms 'religion' and 'definition' were not ambiguous, were clearly understood with no need for clarification. He asserted, 'Both assumptions are wrong'.⁷¹ Baird offered the term 'essence' as a further example of an ambiguous term used by scholars of religion. In order to achieve clarity and understanding, scholars ought to define the meaning and significance of any ambiguous term introduced in scholarly works to enable other scholars to understand clearly the semantic intention of the author. The intentionality of the phenomenological method described by van der Leeuw is clearly signposted; his Christian faith and reference to the Christian God are reflected not only in the subject of his chapters but also in the clear reference to his beliefs within the chapters. His naming and classification of typologies also reflected Christian doctrines: sacrifice, saviour, sacred, purification, myth are some examples.

In the final analysis, van der Leeuw appeared not only to compare religions and religious phenomena within an inappropriate Christian framework, he was unable also to bracket his personal Christian faith. Nonetheless, *epoché* and empathy I suggest may prove worthwhile phenomenological principles to follow. Equally, to

⁷⁰ See Jensen, 'Universal Terms', 238

⁷¹ Baird, *Category Formation*, 1.

bracket the intruding 'essence' of Christian soteriology as the common theme of comparison seems an essential criterion. The term 'Power', van der Leeuw's more general concept of essence, or religious experience, devoid of any Christian overlay, appears a more appropriate term in which to classify similarities into typologies. The final stage in van der Leeuw's phenomenological method was the directive of 'perpetual correction' in the sense of a phenomenological method that undergoes continued re-appraisal. My aim is to emulate these principles, to re-evaluate again the re-constructed methodology in the practical application of the phenomenological method to Egyptian narratives. The latter would seem an appropriate subject not only because the naming principle was a key concept in ancient Egyptian society but also because Van der Leeuw held an interest in Egyptology. He offered the Egyptian first dynasty as an example of the interrelationship between the objectivity of the researcher and the subjectivity of the Egyptian culture. The structural link was the human interrelationship of the historical past using the premise of human understanding.

If we are astonished by an ancient myth, or an Egyptian head, and confront it with the conviction that there is something that is intelligible in accord with our experience, although it is infinitely remote from us and unattainable ... we have at least the possibility of a more deeply comprehending glance, and perhaps of achieving a living representation.⁷²

Van der Leeuw acknowledged the human-centred nature of comprehension, that as human beings we are able to understand an ancient myth or archaeological feature because of the nature of society as a human construct. Following this theme, I have selected three different disciplines in which to illustrate the scholarly application of the phenomenological principles of *epoché* and empathy. Following this positive approach to phenomenology, my final objective is to apply a similar methodology, including re-appraisal of the crucial naming and classification, to the textual narratives of ancient Egypt.

5.4 Scholars 'do' Phenomenology: an Overview

This brief overview is relevant to this chapter if only to illustrate that the secondary literature used in this section appears to demonstrate a scholarly awareness

⁷² Jaspers, *Psychopathologie*, 404. Quoted by van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 677, n.1.

of the fundamental principles of the phenomenological method, yet with little reference, if any, to the term 'phenomenology'. It may be that a scholarly subjective-objective interrelationship is indicative of a human-centred approach to understanding empirical data. Equally, the aim of the phenomenologist of religion is to compare and interpret the *different* ways in which the 'supernatural' is experienced by human beings, the ways in which humans understood the phenomena in their lives. The experience of the Christian God in the life of van der Leeuw for example, may be similar to the experience of the plurality of gods in the lives of the ancient Egyptians, although the concept of the superhuman may be different in form. Van der Leeuw illustrated a human-centred approach to his phenomenological method when he suggested that because the past was closed to us its reconstruction was necessary for meaning and understanding. The historian, archaeologist, phenomenologist or researcher, are representative of those who may perform such a reconstruction; their interest concerns the actions of human beings in the world. Thus, we may understand our human neighbours suggested van der Leeuw, whether geographically distant in China or temporally distant in the past three or four thousand years ago in Egypt, only through reconstruction of the past.⁷³

Similarly, Kemp, the Field Director of the excavations at el-Amarna, an archaeological site in Egypt, recognised the biological premise that we are all members of the same human species. Kemp emphasised that the human ability to 'cross cultural boundaries' demonstrated the 'common nature of human consciousness', whether, as van der Leeuw proposed, the boundary was geographical or temporal. Kemp acknowledged also the objective-subjective view that some religions have survived to take their place in the modern world: '[religions] are thus directly accessible to outsiders and have found within their own ranks apologists [insiders] to teach outsiders'.⁷⁴ Conversely, in ancient Egypt because priests failed to 'explain their beliefs in cogent form to outsiders', *the insider view has often been misrepresented*.⁷⁵ The Greek overlay of the Isis and Osiris myth discussed in chapter

⁷³ See van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 671-673.

⁷⁴ Kemp, *Ancient Egypt*, 2.

⁷⁵ Kemp, *Ancient Egypt*, 2. Given the divergence between the predominance of modern literacy skills and their diminutive, 1% presence in ancient Egypt, knowledge of any beliefs would be conveyed orally. Further, given that the divine office of kingship was symbolic of the Power and stability of Egyptian society, and priests, who acted on behalf of the king, had 'insider divine knowledge', they had no need to share such knowledge with the populace at large.

three may be a case in point. Kemp suggested that all avenues of perception are present in each one of us; the significance we give to different cultures, he proposed, may vary according to our own cultural values. Nonetheless, he described an empathic approach to the scholarly study of Egyptian culture reminiscent of the theme of *epoché*: 'My speculation is *restrained* partly by professional considerations – I wish to remain true to my sources', [objectivity]; 'But rational knowledge has proved to be far more fragile than knowledge about the deeper meaning of things that people feel is conveyed by religion', [subjectivity]. Kemp's overall view demonstrated the phenomenological premise that the belief of the adherents is a key factor towards understanding cultural differences. He continued:

If we have the diligence and time we can learn their languages, live amongst the people themselves, absorb their culture, and generally *immerse ourselves* to the point where we can *recreate the mental processes in our own minds*, [subjectivity]... My ancient Egypt is very much *an imagined world* though I hope it cannot too readily be shown to be untrue to the original sources,⁷⁶ (my emphasis).

Kemp appeared to reiterate the concept of human understanding described earlier although in a different form: 'You never really *understand* a person until you consider things from *his point of view*', (my emphasis). He also acknowledged the importance of being true to his original sources, not to impose his own value judgements on other cultures.

Equally relevant to this section is the scientific discipline of archaeoastronomy. Amanda-Alice Maravelia, an archaeoastronomer and Egyptologist centred her critique on the 'biased interpretation of the archaeological records'. As an objective 'outsider' she explained the bias *as if* she was describing the absence of *epoché*; scholars '*project their own misconceptions ... claiming to explain Antiquity*'⁷⁷ (my emphasis). The focus of her challenge was the computer-generated methodology of certain scholars who implied that the priests-astronomers

⁷⁶ Kemp, *Ancient Egypt*, 1-3. Although Kemp in the first part of this statement was referring to Oriental philosophies and religions, his comment may refer equally to ancient Egypt. Kemp's concept of recreating mental processes may be likened to van der Leeuw's theory that understanding results from a reconstruction that 'dawns on us'. Kemp's reference to 'my' Egypt appeared to illustrate a human response to scholarly research. See also Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 672-3.

⁷⁷ Amanda-Alice Maravelia, 'The Stellar Horizon of Khufu', 55, in Bickel, S., Loprieno, A. (eds.), *Basil Egyptology Prize 1: Junior Research in Egyptian History, Archaeology, and Philology*. (Basel: Schwabe & Co., Verlag /AH.17, 2003), 55-74.

of ancient Egypt used a similar method to ascertain the simultaneous transit of two stars.⁷⁸ The aim of the computer-generated method determined an *exact* north-south orientation of the pyramids during the Old Kingdom and particularly the Great Pyramid of Khufu at Giza. Maravelia argued it was a false assumption that the ancient Egyptians were aware of the precession of equinoxes and had knowledge of the celestial equator as an astronomical meaning. As if from the insider view she explained: 'The Egyptians were not preparing celestial snaps or scientifically precise diagrams, but only symbolic and mythological representations which contained rudiments of the truth ...'⁷⁹ Numerous texts inscribed on pyramid walls confirmed the stellar origins of theocratic thought in the Old Kingdom, when the king travelled to the Imperishable Stars, the fixed, circumpolar stars situated in the northern skies.⁸⁰ No textual reference was present in the Pyramid Texts of a measured, northern stellar exactitude. Similarly, there was an absence of any empirical semi-religious or astronomical textual and/or epigraphical evidence that claimed two specific stars were used to align any Old Kingdom pyramid.

Maravelia implied an insider understanding. She considered the empirical data from the view of the ancient Egyptians: 'Their adopted methods were used to obtain practical results, which would be applicable to their everyday life (calendar, measuring time and land, orientation of monuments) but never did they work on science *per se*'.⁸¹ The Egyptian deity Sopdet, the Greek named star Sirius, was associated with the inundation of the Nile, one of the three seasons of the ancient Egyptian calendar: *akhet* (inundation), *peret* (growing) and *shemu* (drought).⁸² Any textual reference in the Pyramid texts to the exact timing of the helical rising of the star Sirius or Sopdet was absent; the *appearance* of the star at the time of the inundation was the criterion rather than its exactitude.

⁷⁸ Cf. For an accurate search today, see Kate Spence, 'Ancient Chronology: Astronomical Orientation of the Pyramids', *Nature* 408, 2000:320-324; D. Rawlins and K. Pickering, 'Ancient Chronology: Astronomical Orientation of the Pyramids', *Nature*, 699, 2001:412; Kate Spence, 'Ancient Chronology: Astronomical Orientation of the Pyramids', *Nature*, 412, 2001:699-700.

⁷⁹ Maravelia, 'Stellar Horizon', 57.

⁸⁰ See Faulkner, *PT*, cf. Pyr.152: 'The king joins the sun-god as an imperishable spirit'; Pyr.458: 'The king becomes an imperishable star'; Pyr.472: 'The king climbs to the sky on a ladder'; Pyr.502: 'The sky is opened to the king'. See also Lichtheim, *AEL*. Vol.1:30, and the king's ascent to the sky. See also Lesko, 'Cosmogonies', 118.

⁸¹ Maravelia, 'Stellar Horizon', 61.

⁸² Kemp, *Ancient Egypt*, 10.

Maravelia, an astronomer, acknowledged the importance of the insider view, that to understand a culture one ought to consider things from the adherent's perspective. The phenomenological presence of *epoché* and empathy are evident when Maravelia suggested that a modern twenty first century computer-generated model would be foreign and would not be validated by the ancient Egyptians. 'If we analyse this model (objective approach) and *try to put ourselves in the place of ancient priests-astronomers* who were unaware of sophisticated techniques and did not use Mathematical Astronomy (subjective approach), we are going to be disappointed'.⁸³ Maravelia described a proposed reconstruction of the past by scholars who appeared to have misinterpreted and subsequently misunderstood the supernatural principles of Egyptian beliefs. Given that she did not use the terms phenomenology, *epoché* or empathy her language implied understanding of the principles.

My final example of the phenomenological method may be observed in the systematic scholarly approach of Literary Studies; the interpretation of literature and the definition and meaning of texts. The familiar themes of phenomenology are present, although as previous examples, the language used may be different. Recent scholarship in the field of Egyptian literature has acknowledged the gradual shift from a discipline closely related to and derived from biblical studies.⁸⁴ Such a shift from viewing Egyptian narratives specifically as texts from a historical perspective or linguistic data, to the *understanding* of texts from an Egyptian perspective using their 'authorial *writings*, as witnesses', is an example of modern scholarship applying the phenomenological principles of empathy and *epoché*.⁸⁵ Given that scholars, as

⁸³ Maravelia, 'Stellar Horizon', 71.

⁸⁴ See R.J. Williams, 'The Sages of Ancient Egypt in the Light of Recent Scholarship', 1, *JAOS*, 101, 1981:1-19. Williams pointed out that the term Wisdom was 'not native to Egypt and has been adopted from biblical studies'.

⁸⁵ This is not to say that early Egyptologists were unaware of the principles of *epoché* and empathy. Cf. A. Erman, preface to *Literature of Ancient Egyptians*, (London: Methuen, 1927), vii-viii. Writing seven decades ago, Erman commented that no-one ought to pass judgement on the Egyptians, nor on the period in human development to which they belonged, that they [scholars] should not infer from it [the Egyptian texts] 'more than it is in a position to give'. Referring to the translation of texts Erman noted: 'An Egyptian's work affects one quite differently, when read as a whole, than when as is customary with us, it is laboriously translated sentence by sentence'. See also Strudwick, *Texts Pyramid Age*, 17-18. Strudwick agreed with Erman on the move away from taking Egyptian texts at face value and assessing them too much in relation to the norms of modern society. Insistence was on careful consideration of the meaning within a particular context. Both comments emphasise understanding and meaning of the texts from the Egyptian viewpoint, the adherent.

outsiders, now define texts into typologies of similarities in order to compare, understand, interpret and describe texts, *as if*, to comprehend the authorial intent of the insider, implies a degree of phenomenological awareness.⁸⁶ Such studies now stress the importance of an objective-subjective interrelationship, not only in the internal structure of such texts but also their *intertextual solidarity* and their *cultural* significance to ancient Egypt as a whole.⁸⁷ These principles may form a significant key to the resolution of the issue of the presence or otherwise of texts not only defined as 'myth' but also classified as a typology of religion.

My purpose in illustrating what appears as a phenomenological presence within the methodology of scholarly research is to emphasise, following van der Leeuw, that we are human beings, as such we have a 'natural' interrelationship of understanding to the 'other'. Secondly, the cultural differences which identify different communities may form an overlay which blurs the distinction between our 'human' and our 'cultural overlay'. If we lack such distinctions and identify deeply with our cultural heritage, then we may have difficulty in 'bracketing' or suspending judgements, theories, opinions, ideas as well as any distinctions between the true or false. This is not to say that it is possible to bracket fully one's value judgements; rather, the intention is the endeavour. The classical phenomenologists discussed in chapter two illustrated the difficulties they experienced in bracketing their religious affinity with Christianity. Today's Egyptologists also experience limitations in reconstructing historical reality, but their method of understanding is from an intuitive, insider view. A recent comment explained:

⁸⁶ Cf. For classifying various texts into typologies, Antonio Loprieno, ed., *Ancient Egyptian Literature: History and Forms*, (AELHF); see esp. the section on 'Phenomenology of Egyptian Literature', 191-336; Parkinson, *Voices from Ancient Egypt*; Simpson, *Literature of ancient Egypt*; Lichtheim, *AEL Vols: 1-3*. See also Hans, Ulrich Gumbrecht, in 'Does Egyptology Need a "Theory of Literature"', 15, in *AELHF*, 3-20. Gumbrecht's use of language implied a phenomenological insider-outsider method: 'At the end, an outsider cannot quite repress the question of what is at stake in the Egyptologists' contemporary fascination with a concept of literature'...this fascination must be 'guided by some intuitions which the outsider, for a sheer lack of reading competence, is not capable of sharing'. See also preface to Bruce G. Trigger, *Early Civilisations: Ancient Egypt in Context*, vii. (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1993). Trigger proposed a comparative study hoping to reveal more about the nature of factors which constrain *human behaviour*. He compared other types of ancient civilisations 'to encourage Egyptologists to develop a comparative interest in other early civilisations'.

⁸⁷ Loprieno, preface to *AELHF*, ix-x. See review of this seminal work in *JNES*, 61, 2002:310-11. The reviewer, John L. Foster states: 'This volume is the most extensive treatment of ancient Egyptian *belles lettres* that has appeared to date'.

Whenever Egyptologists, in their analytical practice have not relied on the universal validity of patterns generalized within cultures, they have produced insights that are all the more important for the historian and the theorist of literature as they are highly counterintuitive. In their majority, these insights focus on the pragmatic conditions for the productions and reception of texts in ancient Egypt.⁸⁸

Accordingly, their research has not depended on the traditional universal patterns of data rather an intuitive approach has been recommended. My task therefore as a researcher, is to attempt to reconstruct the past, to understand as far as possible, the meaning intended by ancient Egyptians with the support of *epoché* and empathy. Equally my reconstruction is an attempt not only to re-experience the data 'as if' from the Egyptian insider view but also to identify the data devoid of any Christian overlay. As van der Leeuw suggested, the texts may be revealed to me as if through a mirror, but the test is whether I may be able to identify fully or in part, the authorial intent of the ancient Egyptians. Kemp suggested this may prove difficult; first, due to the empirical lack of an extensive literature and second, because of the emphasis on non-verbal, pictorial symbolism to convey ancient Egypt's meaning of reality.⁸⁹ My intention is first to re-examine the recent scholarly research on the literature of ancient Egypt briefly introduced earlier. What measure of importance may be placed on the inter-contextual, holistic nature of texts? Secondly, my objective is to reappraise the naming and classifications of different types of texts generally and those designated by scholars as myths as if from the insider Egyptian perspective. In the final analysis, my aim is towards identifying whether or to what extent if any, the narratives defined phenomenologically as the taxon 'myth' provide empirical data within a socio-cultural context.

5.5 Phenomenology of Egyptian 'Texts': a Re-appraisal

Earlier I re-appraised the phenomenological system of van der Leeuw in order to establish whether or to what extent a phenomenological model may be applied to the textual narratives of ancient Egypt. I offer this in the Case Study in the final chapter. First, I use the term 'narrative' in the context of 'story', or 'account' which concerns activities of the various deities or superhuman beings of ancient

⁸⁸ Gumbrecht, 'Does Egyptology need a 'Theory of Literature?', 12,

⁸⁹ Kemp, *Ancient Egypt*, 2. See also Strudwick, *Texts Pyramid Age*, 3. He emphasised the interdependence of text and image in Egyptian representational art.

Egypt, whether or not the narrative has a beginning, middle or end. Further, I use the word 'text' when there is reference to a supernatural being whether in context, for example a type of text, a ritual, incantation or with a brief reference to the name and power of a deity. The priest-scribe may assume the recipient of the text has knowledge of the character and power of the supernatural being and the implication of his or her presence within a text.

Next, I take into consideration that van der Leeuw established a type or ideal type and classified particular types in his *naming* process as types of 'myth'. Given that van der Leeuw's type or ideal type 'concerns a person, a historical situation or a religion' with no *reality* in an empirical sense, it is a suitable tool of measure for classifying similar types of texts.⁹⁰ An analogy of an Ideal type may be compared to a model of religion. An adherent's 'religion' is measured against an Ideal model of religion. It does not exist in reality; some elements may be emphasised more in one tradition than another, other elements may be absent. Sufficient similarities may be identified within the Ideal model in order to justify the *name* 'religion'.⁹¹ Similarly, a phenomenological model may be applied to similar types of narratives or texts, to which a 'name' is given. The Case Study in chapter six presents the example of the Egyptian Opening of the Mouth ritual. The presence of a superhuman being appears as an essential element within van der Leeuw's Ideal type of myth; thus the measure of the presence of a superhuman being is also a key factor to consider when classifying different types of 'texts'.

Finally, the key issue, the 'essence' or essential character which identified typologies of religion into commonalities, was defined by van der Leeuw as the 'sacred' or 'religious experience', discussed earlier. Given that the essential characteristics of typologies of religion were defined within a Christian context, I reiterate my earlier suggestion that the more neutral term 'Power' may be an alternative to the value-laden 'religious experience'.⁹² I have defined the term

⁹⁰ Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 673.

⁹¹ Cf. Models of religion are described in Ninian Smart, *The Religious Experience of Mankind*, (London: Collins, 1979), 3-8; Frank Whaling, *Christian Theology and World Religions*, (Basingstoke: Marshall Pickering, 1986), 37-48.

⁹² Cf. On power, see Smith *Map is not Territory*: 'What we study when we study religion is the variety of attempts to map, construct and inhabit such positions of *power* through the use of myths, rituals and experiences of transformation', 291, and 'texts as *power* sources for temple elite', 293. See Burkert, 'Logic of Cosmology', 102: 'Practically all the names [of the gods], celebrate *power* and supremacy'. See also Carl Olson, 'The Concept of Power in the Works of Eliade and van der Leeuw',

'Power' meaning something which is not only set apart from the mundane in a supernatural context, but also that which has special significance to a community. The concept of Power may have a similar supernatural nature although its significance may be neither homogeneous nor uniform. Each community may identify not only their concept of Power in a different form but also diverse Powers may have different characteristics. The office of Egyptian kingship, I suggest is such a Power.

For example, not only were the gods and goddesses of ancient Egypt considered Powerful in this sense, the different types of Power, discussed later in chapter six, were understood in their descriptions, both in narrative texts and iconography. The falcon-headed god Horus displayed different Power characteristics to the mummified god Osiris in ancient Egyptian ideology; both were identified and interrelated with the *eternal* concept of kingship. Horus symbolised the reigning king; Osiris ruled the eternal Netherworld. Thus, kingship is considered a divine office.⁹³ In comparison, narratives that concerned the Christian doctrine of the Trinity may display similar supernatural Powers identified with the religion of Christianity. Three different characteristics of a similar *eternal* Power may be present within the concept of the Christian God: the Father, the Son and the Spirit or Holy Ghost.⁹⁴

Studia Theologica, 42, 1988:39-53, and the many references to Power in van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*.

⁹³ See Baines, 'Society, Morality', 123-124. In the context of 'divine kingship' as the ruling force for Egypt's social, political and economic structures, Baines noted, that, although the Egyptians had no single term for 'religion', the small elite with kingship at its apex, represented Egyptian society. As such, they interacted with 'religious' beliefs. I posit, that to apply the term 'religion' to ancient Egypt with its presupposed similarity to world religions is to impose a 'religious' value absent within the texts of ancient Egypt.

⁹⁴ Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 414. The image of God as 'Father' is not suggested as a 'given fatherhood', the image proceeds inferentially not from "reality" to the picture, but rather from the picture to reality. Van der Leeuw explained the subtle difference, 'a paternal form in which every *given fatherhood* must conform'. See Kemp, *Ancient Egypt*, 26. Kemp noted that when looked at through the eyes of an archaeologist, 'it is illogical that Christianity should be classed as a monotheistic religion'; the variety of sacred images in stone, wood, brass and stained glass' may suggest Christianity as a 'many-centred system of belief'. See also Dowley, *History of Christianity*, 153. The Apostles' Creed: 'I believe in God Almighty [the Father almighty], And in Christ Jesus, his only son, our Lord Who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary...'

In the context of a typology of religion, the *eternal* and *timeless* nature of 'myth' in both examples, operate in van der Leeuw's model as a 'type' of myth.⁹⁵ Van der Leeuw named saga, fairy tales and legends as similar types of 'myth'; each contained some degree of the eternal or supernatural. Although van der Leeuw does not discuss the degree of 'religiousness' required for the classification of 'myth' he confirmed the presence of some *measure* of the supernatural. In this context certain Egyptian narratives which contained a *degree* or *measure* of the 'superhuman' may, in a broader context, qualify as a type of 'myth'. I will argue in the Case Study in the chapter six that if all texts or narratives of ancient Egypt contain some measure of the supernatural, then all texts may be described as 'myths' or a story about superhuman beings. The problem lies with the modern meaning of the pejorative term 'myth'.

John Baines, Professor of Egyptology, suggested that different *forms* of myths constitute different *types*; the mythic forms are 'affected by the genres to which they belong and by their contexts of performance, use or storage and transmission'. Literary myths, he suggested, constitute one type of myth among many.⁹⁶ As I understand his comment, a brief evocation of a deity within, for example, an 'autobiographical' narrative may indicate conformity in the life of an individual to the ethical principles of the goddess Maat in that the biographer included in the text, the phrase 'loved Maat'.⁹⁷ Similarly, deities may be used as metaphors to describe certain traits of kingship within royal battle texts; the analogy 'like Mont' implied that the king had superhuman, war-like powers 'like Mont', the god of war. Equally relevant, is the name 'Osiris N' discussed in the Case Study. In a

⁹⁵ Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 414. See also Kemp, *Ancient Egypt*, 20. Kemp proposed that Egyptian ideology, he does not differentiate between ideology and religion, stressed three themes: continuity of the past; a unity over geographical and political subdivisions; and stability through the ethical principles of right government by kings. The *eternal* or continuing nature of myth may be interpreted as ancient Egypt's tracing a myth of the past as a model for the present. 'It knew its own past, and fitted its images within the myth-world of ideology'.

⁹⁶ Baines, 'Myth and Literature', 362, in AELHF, 261-378. Baines considered 'myth' a 'sacred or culturally central narrative', that 'such narratives concern deities'.

⁹⁷ See Parkinson, *Voices*, 17. He described an Autobiographical text as a private funerary text which presented the tomb owner's identity, virtues and career in an 'autobiography' inscribed on the walls of his tomb or on a stela; it evolved gradually from lists of titles into formulaic epithets extolling the virtues of the tomb owner. See also the numerous examples in Lichtheim, *Maat in Egyptian Autobiographies and Related Studies*, (Freiburg Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992). 'Doing Maat' indicated that the 'author' had lived in accordance with the ethical principles of the goddess Maat. When in a royal autobiography, reference to Maat concerned the king's political rule within society.

text with no reference other than the context to give meaning, the term by itself, Osiris-N may fail to convey knowledge of the meaning of the name and the prefix implied. Each reference implies a supernatural presence associated with the protagonist of the text; the textual context therefore is important.

Such brief references to deities in general have little *narrative* structure and may *not*, according to Baines, constitute the genre, 'mythic narrative'. Lichtheim concurs that mythological material is employed in varying degrees in Egyptian literature; she presented *The Contendings of Horus and Seth* as a re-telling of an ancient myth: 'it is set entirely among the gods'. Conversely, the tale of *Truth and Falsehood* also takes place among the gods, but the protagonists, she argued, are personified concepts; thus, 'their personalities and actions are those of human beings'.⁹⁸ These comments appear in agreement with Penner's theory discussed earlier, that 'myth' is a story with a beginning, middle, and an end which concerns the deeds of a superhuman beings.⁹⁹ The criterion for the definition of 'myth' therefore suggests the absence of human activity within the context of the story.

From the ancient Egyptian perspective, was it their intention to separate their texts into different genres?¹⁰⁰ Did the ancient Egyptians envisage their writings as an integral whole where different genres formed part of the multifarious textual nature that described their socio-cultural existence? These are crucial questions and pertinent to the understanding of Egyptian texts given that all texts or narratives may have some measure of the presence of supernatural beings.

Conversely, if the term literary narrative incorporates literary theory with its associated fictional implications then the term 'mythic narrative' may confirm Penner's theory that the information 'myth' provided was 'false'.¹⁰¹ On the other hand, modern literary theory incorporates non-fiction and history within for example, the context of cultural studies. I propose the term 'literary theory' in a cultural sense

⁹⁸ Lichtheim, *AEL*. Vol.2:197. For versions of *The Contendings of Horus and Seth*; *Truth and Falsehood*, see Lichtheim, *AEL*. Vol.2: 214-223; Simpson, *Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 91-103.

⁹⁹ See the earlier section on Penner, 5.2.1.

¹⁰⁰ See Williams, 'Sages of Ancient Egypt', 7. Williams rightly suggested that the Egyptians themselves may not have defined their texts into different genres.

¹⁰¹ Cf. On the fictional status of literature, see Loprieno, 'Defining Egyptian Literature', 43-44. See also Harrison, *Themis*, 327. Harrison writing in 1912, echoed and seemed to anticipate Penner's definition of the term 'myth': 'A myth ... is a "purely fictitious narrative". When we say a thing is "mythical" we mean it is non-existent'.

as a general theory of interpretation of *texts*; I will argue that the fictional or non-fictional status may be peripheral to the ancient Egyptians' concept of reality as expressions of *their* truth claims. Equally relevant to the presence or otherwise of superhuman beings in Egyptian texts is the reminder that although mythic narratives are present in other cultures, in Egypt there is '*the near absence of narratives about the gods that can easily be termed myths*'.¹⁰² (my emphasis).

Nonetheless, the absence or rarity of the presence of mythic narratives in Egyptian texts should not be construed as an argument *in absentia* although it merits serious consideration. The lack of a scholarly consensus on a clear definition of 'myth' may be one factor to consider, another may be the fluidity of the meaning of the term 'myth' generally. Was it the intention of the Egyptian priest-scribes to create a literary narrative or to convey in various textual forms concepts of their socio-cultural relationship with the supernatural? In the final analysis, the empirical evidence present in almost all Egyptians texts of the activities and characteristics of the deities of ancient Egypt implies a superhuman presence within the texts *as a whole*.

5.6 Summary

In this chapter my aim was to present positive aspects of the phenomenological method in preparation for the Case Study in the final chapter which incorporates a new hermeneutic of texts with a new approach to the phenomenological method. My research has shown that although many scholars do not use the terms phenomenology, insider, or outsider, their texts displayed considerable understanding of this method. The phenomenological principles of *epoché* and empathy discussed earlier, through the various disciplines of religious studies, law, astronomy and the various views of Egyptian scholars, illustrated the positive aspects of the phenomenological method.

Conversely, I presented critiques from scholars whose views represented a selection of general critiques on aspects of religion and myth. Penner's theory on the false nature of the terms religion and myth coincided with McCutcheon's challenge whether scholars may fully understand another person's beliefs. Given Penner's theory that myth was not only a story that concerns the deeds of superhuman beings

¹⁰² Baines, 'Egyptian Myth', 81.

he suggested that the information myth provided was false. Whether or not these aspects of myth may be applied to the texts of ancient Egypt, the question is finalised in the Case Study.

McCutcheon's negative approach to the insider view was addressed in this section in a positive format. Throughout my thesis I have emphasised that the phenomenological method does not claim to fully understand an adherent's beliefs; rather, the claim is for a probable outcome of understanding given the elusive nature of certainty, if only because of phenomenology's human-centred approach. It is appropriate therefore that the principles of phenomenology have provided not only my method of research but also a bridge of some substance between the key *emic-etic*, subjective-objective, inter-relationship approach.

In the final chapter, my method in the Case Study is to re-appraise the modern naming and classifying of Egyptian texts, to compare the typologies suggested by scholars against the meanings intended by the Egyptians. The primary texts will act as the authorial intent thus translations of various terms from primary texts will be necessary in order to validate the meaning intended by the ancient Egyptians. The aim is to re-appraise and compare the meaning of the texts, to respect the adherent's views and to avoid any compromise to the intentions of the Egyptian texts. I mentioned earlier that Pike suggested one should not attempt to utilize an *etic* (outsider) description when an *emic* (insider) one was required, implying that a cultural key was required to gain knowledge to an *emic* system.¹⁰³ Only then was a subjective-objective approach viable. Finally, following van der Leeuw, I will re-examine the naming and classification of texts not only for accuracy but also from the adherent's perspective; the texts will act as the validating referent.

¹⁰³ Pike, 'Etic and Emic', 30.

Chapter Six

A CASE STUDY

A new phenomenological concept of 'myth' in an Egyptian socio-political context

The important task is not to prove this, it is plain to see, but to clarify its relationship to the message of the document, and ask the hermeneutical question: in what sense is the interpretation an exegetical "reading into" – and in what sense is it an exegetical "drawing out of" the document.¹

6.1 Introduction

My earlier analysis of the meaning of the term 'myth' in chapter three concluded that the terms *mythos* and *logos* were, in the Greek context, words which refer to a story or an account the context of which designated the meaning of the terms. Therefore, 'myth' is a word; it is a story or account in which the context defines the subject and actors in the drama of the narrative. The context therefore reveals the meaning of the 'myth'. Equally, the context should be whatever the authors of the 'myth' say it is. However, given that the term 'myth' has acquired over time the adverse status of 'false', all forms of accounts that concern supernatural beings carry a similar pejorative meaning.² Equally, in the secular world today the term 'myth' is frequently used in a general context to mean 'false'. For these reasons and with the integrity of the ancient Egyptians as the premise, I elect to use the word 'texts' or 'narratives' in my Case Study rather than the baggage-laden term 'myth'. The comments above on the context of myths apply in equal measure - that texts reveal the meaning intended by the priestly scribes, the *literati* of ancient Egypt.

In previous chapters, I presented texts which demonstrated the office of kingship in a socio-political context. I will argue that the king is the protagonist in

¹ Ragnhild Bjerre Finnestad, 'Egyptian Thought about Life as a Problem of Translation', 37, in *Religion of the Ancient Egyptians*.

² For a critical approach to myth in the Classical and Romantic Periods and in particular the ambivalent relationship between the Enlightenment period and myth, see Christopher Jamme, 'Portraying Myth More Convincingly,' *IJPS*, 12, 2004:29-45

most if not all texts of ancient Egypt, either directly or indirectly in the various textual genres to be examined. My meaning of the term socio-political is in the context of the political role of governance and affairs of the state of Egypt; the close liaison between kingship and the Egyptian population results in an ordered society. Equally, the king was supported by an entourage of goddesses, described earlier in the Pyramid Texts, although the roles of the goddesses were neither submissive nor subservient. My point is that the king and the elite members of Egyptian society appeared to consider a superhuman presence essential to their world order, both earthly and cosmic.³ The dual role of Egyptian kingship indicates that the king is both a human king and, as the manifestation of the royal god Horus at his coronation, he is also a divine king.⁴ Allen's explanation of the complex motif of Egyptian kingship is succinct.

When referring to the king's divine power, texts use the word *nswt* usually translated "king". It is the *nswt*, for example, who issues decrees, appoints officials, and represents Egypt before the gods. When referring to the individual who happened to hold this divine power, texts use the word *hm*. It is usually translated "Majesty", but it really means something like "incarnation": the *hm* is the individual in whom the divine power is incarnated.⁵

An alternative, although empathic, view is voiced by Quirke, of the 'untranslatable' of *hm* and *hm.f* traditionally rendered by Egyptologists in English as 'Majesty' and 'His Majesty' respectively. Its meaning is reduced to a synonym for the modern interpretation 'king'. Quirke and like-minded Egyptologists today now interpret the meaning as *hm nswt* meaning 'the Power of the king'; the term *hm* is translated Power *hm.f* as his Power.⁶ Although the interpretations of Allen and Quirke appear to differ, as I understand it, both interpretations convey comparable meanings.

³ Archaeology is sparse on detailed information of the general populace of ancient Egypt. Recent archaeological research gives evidence of 'workmen villages' but this section of the community, the artisans, sculptors and scribes, are considered members of the elite. See Barry Kemp, 'The Amarna Workmen's Village in Retrospect', *JEA* 73, 1987:21-50.

⁴ For Donald Redford's so-called 'mythological jargon of kingship' see, 'The Concept of Kingship', 160, in *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*, 158-183. For an empathic approach to the 'phenomenon of kingship' on culture, on the institution of kingship, and his divinity, see Baines, 'Kingship, Definition of Culture', *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*, 4-47

⁵ Allen, *Middle Egyptian*, 31. For Ancient Egyptian society and kingship, see also 31-33.

⁶ See Quirke, *Egyptian Literature*, 7.

Both interpretations convey the active force of *hm* as a superhuman Power, something beyond that of the human being as an earthly ruler, although it is within the human frame that the Power of kingship resides.⁷ Further, the Power of the Egyptian king is contained within a social context; the physical manifestations, the result of the labours of the populace on behalf of the king, produce benefits for the state of Egypt. Accordingly, as the people are the servants of the king, he is a servant to the gods *hm ntrw*. The traditional meaning of a servant *hm* signifies the 'agent' of royal Power. Equally a priest *hm* is a servant, an agent, who acts on behalf of the king.

Here is an example of *epoché*, yet it is a word not mentioned by either scholar. As I understand it, scholars of this calibre search for modern words to convey their obvious understanding of the complex nature of the office of kingship. The process implies an interrelationship between the subjective non-verbal understanding of the texts and the objective scholarly need for a descriptive account to convey that understanding. The aim is for clarity, to convey the meaning of a complex aspect of Egyptian kingship as if from the insider view.⁸ Thus texts reveal an interrelationship of some substance not only between the Egyptian king and his people but also a supernatural liaison between the king and the state gods. Thus, I posit that the Egyptian king is considered a god in the context of the divine office of kingship.

The Case Study will take the form of a new hermeneutic of the term 'myth', demonstrated within the framework of a new approach to the phenomenological method and commensurate with the method of comparing data. The difference lies in the absence of what is considered the essential common elements which classify categories of 'religion'. The textual comparisons may be applied to other cultures in the model provided. The final part of the Case Study presents an example of a so-called Egyptian 'myth' generally named as an 'incantation'.

⁷ For the annual rejuvenation at Luxor Temple of the superhuman Power of the king and his *ka* see Bell, 'Luxor Temple and the Cult of the *ka*', 251-204.

⁸ See Bleeker's concept of clarity in 'Phenomenological Method', 98. For Bleeker, because phenomenology of religion is concerned with the 'ideological connection', clarity of the phenomena is gained when 'the facts are severed from their historical settings'.

6.2 Framework for a New Hermeneutic of the Taxon 'Myth'

Whether Egyptian texts concern a story with a beginning, middle and end, Quirke confirms that certain Egyptian texts include indicators of a beginning, a formulaic opening phrase *h3t-^c* and end-note phrase *iw.f pw* 'this is its end', for example, in literary papyri of the late Middle Kingdom.⁹ Equally, whether a brief reference to deities in statements or the name only of a deity in texts constitutes a 'mythic account', narrative or text, I suggest that the classical phenomenologists accorded a similarly broad textual context to religious data. They refrained from determining the degree or measure of similarity between each type of text, whether general, 'slight or pronounced' or in their familial analogy from the close similarity of a sibling to the more remote relationship of distant cousins.¹⁰ Accordingly, given that my thesis centres on whether or not Egyptian texts may be designated 'myth' in the context of 'religion' or as I propose, in a socio-cultural context, this chapter offers a demonstration of the latter. This is not to say that the Egyptian texts lack a superhuman presence; rather, this element forms an integral part of their socio-cultural structure.

My method follows the phenomenological principles not only of *epoché* and empathy but also a subjective-objective approach to the empirical data generally following the phenomenological method of van der Leeuw described in chapter four. First I collated and scrutinized objectively a large selection of published texts.¹¹ Next I compared different scholarly interpretations of the texts before the third stage, grouping the empirical data into similar types or textual genres. Following this stage, my next objective was to classify the different genres into their appropriate type of texts; given that the textual context rather than a 'religious' or supernatural presence

⁹ Stephen Quirke, *Egyptian Literature*, 30. An opening phrase also used to introduce speeches of various gods: *ḏd mdw n* (words spoken by).

¹⁰ See chapter two.

¹¹ Except otherwise noted, a selection of Egyptian sources used in this chapter with reference to genres and modern literary theory applied to Egyptian texts, see Lichtheim, *Maat in Egyptian Autobiographies*; Strudwick, *Texts from the Pyramid Age*; Quirke, *Egyptian Literature*; Loprieno, 'Defining Egyptian Literature', in *AELHF*, 39-58; John Baines, 'Classicism and modernism in the literature of the New Kingdom', in *AELHF*, 157-174; Loprieno, The "King's Novel", in *AELHF*, 277-295; Quirke, 'Narrative Literature', in *AELHF*, 263-276; Simpson, 'Belles Lettres and Propaganda', in *AELHF*, 435-443; Williams, 'Sages of Ancient Egypt', 1-19; John Baines and Christopher Eyre, 'Four Notes on Literacy', *GM*, 61, 1983:65-96. On the general characterization and historical studies of kingship, see the various sections in *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*. For further references to literature sources, see chapter five, 166, n.86.

informs the different genres. Accordingly, rather than seeking a common 'religious' element to classify similar types into groups, the key issues identified in chapter two, the signifiers of commonality, the 'essence' of religion, *homo religiosus*; and the ahistorical nature of religion, are removed.

Given the phenomenological premise of the adherent's autonomy of the data, what appears to be foreign to the ethos of the ancient Egyptian texts is omitted from the new paradigm of the phenomenological system. Consequently, further re-appraisal of the texts from a contextual perspective was necessary; the fourth stage was a subjective approach. The texts previously grouped by scholars of Egyptian literature into different genres are re-examined; the names designated previously to the miscellany of texts are compared with the textual contexts.¹² This is not to say that scholars have grouped texts into inappropriate genres; rather, the grouping may have been classified within the context of modern terminology. Nonetheless, the aim of the new hermeneutic is to consider the texts *as if* from the perspective of the ancient Egyptians.

The fourth stage therefore is to identify 'what appears' to the researcher from a human rather than a religious perspective, to refrain from imposing an overlay of modern concepts of 'religiousness' over Egyptian texts. In chapters two and three an overlay of Christian beliefs and Greek culture was demonstrated. This Case Study seeks not only to clarify the Egyptian meaning of their texts but also to establish the positive contribution of the phenomenological method to future research. My *endeavour* is to understand the empirical texts from the insider view with some awareness that as a human being, I may not achieve full understanding of the meaning of the texts as the adherent intended. The practical application of the phenomenological method, I propose, is a systematic subjective-objective approach of considerable benefit to scholarly research.

My intentions therefore are to re-appraise the naming of texts. The 'naming' principle is a key concept in ancient Egypt, and in the process a deeper understanding of the texts may be realised. Consequently, names and context matter. Equally to understand the texts from the insider view may determine the socio-political significance, if any, of the texts. As a phenomenologist, Bleeker's comments serve as

¹² See 11 above.

a reminder of one of the key principles of phenomenology that ‘the phenomenological method implies the *unprejudiced observation*’ of the data. Given his statement that the phenomenologist seeks to ‘*fathom* the meaning’ of the texts, he infers that the phenomenologist may have some difficulty in achieving an ‘unbiased, critical yet understanding approach (my emphasis).¹³ Nonetheless, his premise appears to be the *endeavour* to understand the perspective of the adherent.

In the final analysis, I propose that the subjective-objective partnership is realised in the fifth stage when the researcher-phenomenologist ‘draws back’ from the subjective position and *attempts* to describe his or her understanding of the texts objectively. In other words, what he or she has understood from the texts now retained in human memory, whether recalled only in part, the scholarly textual records of the human experience act as support of the understanding experienced by the phenomenologist. Thus, the researcher is able to re-appraise objectively the textual records experienced at the time the researcher experienced understanding of the texts, van der Leeuw interprets the human experience that it, ‘dawns on us’.¹⁴

For this reason, I propose a continuous re-appraisal of the texts if only to achieve the most credible unbiased account of the experience. The familiar archaeological one-liner that an archaeologist ‘knows only as much as his or her last dig’ is one view of archaeology as an ongoing process of knowledge. Similarly, the criterion of the phenomenologist is to draw out of the texts the authorial intent of the adherents whether Egyptian or otherwise then follow with a continued re-appraisal of the data. In my research the terms ‘myth’ and ‘religion’ within the disciplines of phenomenology, religion, Egyptology and briefly within other disciplines, were subjected to this level of scrutiny.

6.3 For a Socio-Political Status of the Taxon ‘Myth’

If the Greek terms *mythos* and *logos* examined in chapter three determined the changing authoritative *context* of the meaning of the words, then Plato and the philosophers interpreted and imposed a socio-political authority on the meaning of

¹³ Bleeker, *Hathor*, 3.

¹⁴ This is not to say that the subject-objective human experience is the same as van der Leeuw’s ‘religious’ experience, rather the experience concerns understanding the content of the texts from the insider view, that is, the ancient Egyptian view. Thus the subjective-objective interrelationship concerns the phenomenologist-outsider’s understanding of the texts of the insider-Egyptian; empathy and bracketing implies the absence of any imposed overlay.

mythos and *logos* for the purpose of the state. In this context, rather than denuding *mythos* or *logos* of all supernatural characters, the Greeks chose to retain their divine status as a functional tool to maintain societal order, whilst simultaneously assimilating for the state, the authoritative power previously held by the Hesiodic goddess-inspired authority. As I interpret the terms *mythos* and *logos* in the Greek context, the terms may be more appropriately interpreted in a socio-political context in which a superhuman presence is evident

From a different perspective, the concept of a 'false' belief is similar to that of the false nature of myth; both reveal an authoritative truth claim. For example, the early Christian Church had difficulty in knowing on what authoritative grounds certain doctrines may be accepted or refuted. 'In a word the central issue was that of Authority'.¹⁵ The polemic against the non-conformists of the early Church who disagreed on the Rule of Faith proposed by Irenaeus and Tertullian,¹⁶ a summary of the beliefs of the 'whole Church', was reminiscent of the Greek Sophist and Philosophical polemic against the Hesiodic divine authority. The Greeks required an ordered state in which the elitist 'few' assumed authority and responsibility for the ethical standards and supernatural beliefs of the 'populace of the many', as did the early Christian community.

Accordingly, if the beliefs of the people opposed either the philosophical teachings of the fifth century Platonic state or the doctrinal teachings of the Christian 'Church', then such beliefs were deemed 'false' or 'heretic'. Equally, given that the Church authorities considered biblical texts difficult and obscure for the 'simple folk' to understand, then priests and ministers became the representatives of Church Authority; biblical texts were interpreted on behalf of the people. Similarly, the various 'inquisitions' levied by the different Church and State authorities may serve as examples of the religio-political pressure to comply with 'religious' truth claims. The persecution of the Christians, Jews and Muslims to the various inquisitions was the result of heretical beliefs. Following the 'mythic' analogy that 'my belief' and 'my story' are 'true'; those beliefs which are different, they do not conform to 'my' authoritative teachings, the 'other' story then, falls within the rubric of 'false'.

¹⁵ Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church*, (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 41. Worthy of note is Chadwick's use of the capitalised word 'Authority'.

¹⁶ For the concept of Faith and Order in the early Church and various aspects which constituted heresy see Chadwick, *Early Church*, 32-45.

This is not a phenomenological problem *per se*; rather, I suggest it is a human issue, the result of the absence of *epoché* in the research method for example, in the bracketing of any distinction between the true and the false. When phenomenology is religion-centred the distinction is between ‘my’ religion compared to ‘your’ religion and, as I indicated in chapter two, van der Leeuw suggested that the religion of the phenomenologist may itself act as the signifier of commonality.

My point is that historically ‘religion’, like the terms ‘myth’ and ‘truth’, are elusive terms, slippery in the meaning that the terms are difficult to grasp and given that they may mean different things to different cultures. In a secular state, religion may form an exclusive role in which there is no compulsion to be ‘religious’ but the Church will hold authority over religious doctrines. Equally, when Church and State conjoin in religious doctrines, the religiousness of the people may be subject to the authority of the Church and State; the Early Church is an example. Either concept forms part of the structure of a culture’s socio-political stability. For example, in the Judiciary system of Courts of Law truth claims are made under oaths, different divine authorities (Islam is an example) are validating referents.¹⁷ The purpose of all civilisations is to maintain an ordered society.¹⁸ These comments lead to the next section the aim of which is to demonstrate the role of kingship as the defining factor in an ordered society.

6.4 Phenomenology of Egyptian Texts

The purpose of the Case Study is to establish the socio-political significance of the office of Egyptian kingship within the various Egyptian texts and iconography. Equally, it is to ascertain whether ‘myths’ in the modern sense may be identified within these texts. In the next sections I offer a practical demonstration of the classification of Egyptian texts into different types; the context is the signifier which determines the meaning and type of each group. My aim is not only to re-appraise the use of modern terms to interpret Egyptian texts but also to offer alternatives from the Egyptian perspective.

¹⁷ On the phenomenology of law, see the section in chapter five.

¹⁸ Cf. For an early structured society see Jacobson, ‘Primitive Democracy in Ancient Mesopotamia’, 159-72.

For example, rather than the term ‘funerary’ texts I will use ‘transfiguration’ texts *s3h.w*; for ‘tomb’ the more appropriate ‘house of eternity’ or ‘house of gold’ *hwt-nbw*; for the ‘tomb-owner’ I propose the general term Osiris-N used by Egyptians in their stock supply of the books of *Coming Forth by Day*.¹⁹ When discussing specific papyri I will use the names, Osiris Ani and Osiris Hunefer.²⁰ Finally, for the modern term ‘mortuary temple’ I will use the Egyptian phrase ‘house of millions of years’ - it demonstrates textually the Egyptian meaning of the concept intended of eternal time. Next I appraise the aptly named ‘instruction’ texts the context of which demonstrates a royal and supernatural presence. A general summary follows with the remainder of the texts. I present in the final section a re-appraisal of the familiar so-called ‘mythic’ account of, *The God and his Unknown Name of Power*.

6.4.1 Naming and Classifying Types: ‘Funerary’ Texts

The so-called conventionally named ‘funerary’ texts²¹ inscribed on the walls or written on papyri enclosed within the Egyptian named ‘houses of gold’, form *quantitatively* the majority textual sources from ancient Egypt.²² The modern naming process by Egyptologists classified the context of texts with their location; the term ‘funerary’ appeared appropriate in that the primary sources were discovered in ‘burials’ (houses of gold) or ‘mortuary temples’ (houses of millions of years). The main genres included in the ‘funerary’ types of texts are: Pyramid texts; Coffins texts; the books of *Coming Forth by Day* (Books of the Dead); *Books of Breathing*; The New Kingdom Books of the Netherworld, *The Amduat*; *The Books of the Sky*,

¹⁹ I have chosen to apply the Egyptian name *Coming Forth by Day* rather than the modern rendered, *Book of the Dead*.

²⁰ Although each king is identified by his cartouche in the Pyramid Texts, either ‘Osiris-N’ or ‘the Osiris-N’, are the conventional naming format of the book, *Coming Forth by Day*. Generally the Osiris-N was followed by the name of the transfigured being, together with his or her titles of office. For brevity, I have omitted the titles. Archaeological records show certain so-called ‘stock’ papyri. They indicate that the temporary ‘N’ would be replaced later with the name of the subsequent owner of the papyrus, for example, Osiris Hunefer. For a similar naming process, see Faulkner, preface to *PT*, vii. In his translation Faulkner used the uniform term, ‘King’, to indicate that the corpus refers to all kings of the fifth and sixth dynasties.

²¹ For an Egyptian perspective on the term ‘funerary’, see Werner Forman, Stephen Quirke, eds., *Hieroglyphs and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 7.

²² See Gumbrecht, ‘Does Egyptology need a “Theory of Literature”’, 12; Parkinson, *Voices*, 23; Quirke, *Egyptian Literature*, 14.

and others.²³ All texts concern the transfiguration process which transforms an earthly being, either royal or non-royal into superhuman status.

Other names designated to the genre 'funerary' texts, for example, 'religious' or 'theological', may suggest the presence and actions of superhuman beings. Conversely, the modern terms fail to realise the meanings intended by the Egyptians. This is not to imply that scholars used the terms 'religious' or 'theological' in the context of Christian theology or a colonial interpretation of the term 'religion', although it serves to emphasise that both words carry a subtle implication.²⁴ The universal nature of the term 'funerary' implies that cultures have more similarities to their beliefs than differences, that similarities are the criteria. Ancient Egypt appears to demonstrate a difference.

For example, from an Egyptian perspective, to name the texts 'funerary' implies an association with the modern concept of the finality of death.²⁵ Egyptian texts convey the *absence* of a transcendent god in the Christian sense where at death the person would become one with all; to an Egyptian such unity implies non-existence.²⁶ Equally at the apex of the model of world religions the concept of a Transcendent Being presupposes similarities that all belief systems have a common 'Supreme Being'.²⁷ Texts reveal that the ancient Egyptians rather than seeking *non-existence* their belief was to continue not only an existence in the 'living' world (although in a different form) but also they expected to exist among the hierarchy of gods within the superhuman world.²⁸ Quirke describes the process where a 'dead person could be made into an eternally rejuvenated being':

²³ For a detailed summation of the majority of texts that concern the Egyptian Afterlife, see Hornung, *Afterlife*.

²⁴ See Flood, *Phenomenology*, 230-234, and his section on Post-colonial theory. On the 'secret identification of religion in our Western culture', see Ninian Smart, *The Phenomenon of Religion*, (London: MacMillan Press, 1973), 7. See also Gertie Englund, 'Gods as a Frame of Reference', 7-8.

²⁵ *Chambers Dictionary*, 673, defined the term funeral as 'disposal of the dead, with related ceremonies or observances'.

²⁶ Cf. *The NIV Study Bible*, 1991: John 17:21, '[T]hat all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you', and Luke 17:21, '[T]he kingdom of God is within you and among you'.

²⁷ Cf. Models of religion, quoted in chapter five, are described in Smart, *Religious Experience*, 3-8 and Whaling, *Christian Theology*, 37-48.

²⁸ See Edward F. Wente, 'Mysticism in Pharaonic Egypt?', 161, *JNES*, 41, 1982:161-179. See also Allen, *Middle Egyptian*, 95.

Today we call these ancient texts funerary literature, but this technical term does them little justice; these are texts to transfigure the dead, to make human beings into immortal gods.²⁹

For these reasons and given the majority status of the so-called group of texts classified by scholars today as ‘funerary’, I propose that the texts of the ancient Egyptians signified an inter-active participation in an earthly-superhuman sense of being rather than the final passive state conveyed by the meaning of the term, ‘funerary’.

The Opening the Mouth ritual, a formulaic rite referred to briefly in chapter three, demonstrates the significance in which the Egyptians held this transforming ritual; rather than death, it signified rebirth.³⁰ Equally, similar forms of this key ritual remained constant and testify to its importance throughout and beyond the three thousand years of ancient Egypt’s historical era. the Opening the Mouth ritual inscribed on the walls of Pyramids, written on papyri and depicted in iconography, is suitable source data to validate the context of the beliefs held by the ancient Egyptians of an Afterlife of some substance. The ritual shares common elements practiced continuously from the historic Old Kingdom period through to the New Kingdom period, into the Greco-Roman period and on into the second century C.E.³¹ An awareness of these common elements may help towards understanding not only the function of this important ritual but also its importance to the Egyptian concept of being; papyri and wall inscriptions in the ‘houses of gold’ revealed a fluid concept of existence over a period of three thousand years.

6.4.2 Naming and Classifying Types: ‘Transfiguration’ Texts

In the Old Kingdom period, texts inscribed on the walls of the pyramid of the fifth dynasty King Unis, the oldest *corpus* of Egyptian literature, expounded the

²⁹ Forman, *Hieroglyphs and the Afterlife*, 7.

³⁰ For a general overview of the ritual see Svein Bjerke. ‘Remarks on the Egyptian Ritual of “Opening the Mouth” and its Interpretation’, 206, *Numen*, 12, 1965, 201-16. His comment written 40 years ago serves to demonstrate the scholar’s propensity towards understanding the Egyptian beliefs from the insider view: ‘In an indirect way the Egyptians have thus given us a valuable clue to our understanding of this ritual’.

³¹ For Opening the Mouth rituals, see the description in Murnane, *Ancient Egypt*, 1996. For example, inscribed on the walls of the tomb of the vizier, Rekhmire, 76; the tomb of Tutankhamun, 317; the tomb of Seti I, 320-1; and Ramesses IX, 326. For a description of ‘houses of gold’ see the chapter on ‘Mansions of Eternity’, 79-89.

various supernatural forms to which the king expected to exist in the Netherworld; as an Imperishable Star, later as Osiris, or to join the solar boat of Ra. Central to the superhuman transformations were the pyramid inscription of the Opening the Mouth ritual. Although the ritual continued in a similar form throughout Egypt's historical era, socio-political changes at the end of the Old Kingdom introduced the ritual to a wider populace.

Kings no longer enjoyed the monopoly of immortality in which the Opening the Mouth ritual was an essential part. Coffin Texts developed from the Pyramid Texts, extended the ritual and beliefs of immortality to non-royal elites during the First Intermediate Period, although there is some evidence in the late Old Kingdom period.³² By the New Kingdom state authority gave the populace in general similar guarantees of immortality if the book, *Coming Forth by Day*, was included in their 'houses of gold'. The Opening the Mouth ritual therefore was an essential element not only in the transition from an 'earthly' to a 'superhuman being' but also a significant presence in both forms of existence. We may call it an element of transcendence.

One of the earliest texts is in a section of the Pyramid Texts with the chapter heading, *The Ritual of Opening the Mouth*, introduced briefly in chapter three. It required the reigning king to perform this key ritual on his royal predecessor.³³ The full ritual is described in Pyr. 1330-1: '[Y]our mouth is split open by Horus with this little finger of his with which [he] split open the mouth of his father, with which he split open the mouth of Osiris. I am your son, I am Horus, I am a 'loving-son' priest of my father in this my name of 'Loving son'.³⁴ My point in quoting this text is to illustrate the importance of the royal son-motif later absorbed by the elite members of Egyptian society in that the eldest son of a family emulated the role of the royal son. As the eldest son of the king he was required to give offerings and perform

³² Non-royals in the Old Kingdom occasionally shared the royal status of immortality when given 'approval' by the king. The 6th dynasty 32-roomed mastaba of Mereruka, the vizier and son-in-law of the 6th dynasty king, Teti, is one example. The mastaba was built close to the pyramid of Teti at Sakkara. A 'false door', offering table and 'serdab' to house the *ka* of Mereruka, not only testified to his expectancy of a supernatural existence with the gods, it may serve as an example of the later elite burials in the later First Intermediate Period.

³³ See Faulkner, *PT*, 3. See also Pyr. 11.

³⁴ Faulkner, *PT*, 209.

various rituals to ensure the continued existence of the *ka* of the king. A similar expectancy was required of the eldest son of each family where the superhuman father was dependent on the earthly son. The living family were conjoined to their supernatural family in a repetition of rituals and offerings.

For example, in the Pyramid Texts, the aim of the Opening the Mouth ritual was the return of sensory life to King Unis and other sixth dynasty kings. Performance of the ritual enabled the kings to see, smell, breathe, hear, and eat, to partake of ritual offerings of food and clothing presented by Horus, the reigning king and 'loving-son' of Osiris. Offerings intended for the sustenance of the *ka*, the 'life-force', 'twin' or 'double' of King Unis, formed an essential part of the Opening the Mouth ritual. Pyr.772-3 described offerings made to the king's *ka*: 'O King be aware, take this god's offering of yours with which you are content every day, a thousand of bread, a thousand of beer, a thousand of oxen, a thousand of fowl, a thousand of all sweet things, a thousand of every kind of clothing'.³⁵ The Opening the Mouth ritual accompanied by offerings of food, drink and linen for the *ka* of the transfigured being as well as the ritual participation of the elder son, were key factors in an anticipated continued superhuman existence. The ancient Egyptians expected to enjoy an on-going existence.

To clarify the meaning further from the insider view, almost one thousand years after the first appearance of the ritual in the Pyramid Texts, common features of the Opening the Mouth ritual were illustrated on the chamber walls of New Kingdom 'houses of gold' and papyri lodged within the mummified beings. The walls of Tutankhamun's 'house of gold' discussed earlier although in a different context, displayed a pictorial version of the Opening the Mouth ritual described in the Pyramid Texts.³⁶ In the examination of both texts and iconography, a deeper understanding of the more obscure meanings of the Egyptian concept of existence is realised. Rather than seeing the chamber of the 'house of gold' as a place of finality the iconography revealed that it was golden-yellow, the colour of gold and symbolic of its imperishable and eternal nature (Fig.5). Similarly, in naming the chamber the

³⁵ See the Offering Rituals in Ian Shaw and Paul Nicholson, *British Museum Dictionary of Ancient Egypt*, (London: British Museum Press, 1995), 209. See also 'offerings for your *ka*' in Allen, *Middle Egyptian*, 80.

³⁶ For the earlier reference to the tomb of Tutankhamun see chapter three.

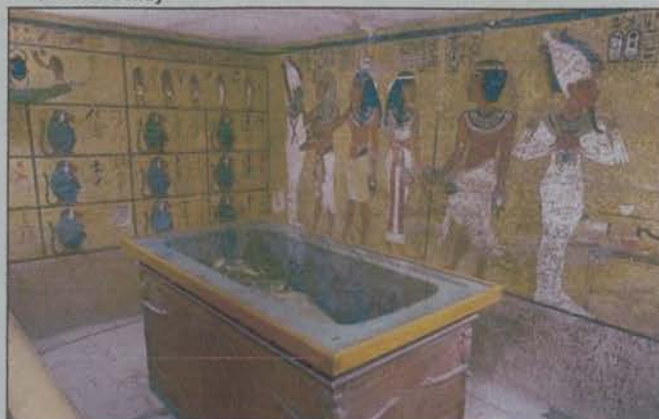


Fig.5 The 'house of gold' of Tutankhamun. KV62. Theban Mapping Project Ref. 15161



Fig.6 Detail: Osiris, Horus-Tutankhamun and his ka. Theban Mapping Project, Ref. 14894

'house of gold' the ancient Egyptians conveyed textually and visually their meaning and significance of eternity rather than the finality of death in the modern sense.³⁷

Horus, Tutankhamun and his ka (Fig.6) illustrate the three-fold concept of the eternal nature of kingship. In the centre, Tutankhamun is Horus the reigning king, he embraces and is embraced by his father Osiris, the simultaneous unifying force of the ka 𓂏 presence results in a syncretism of all three. The perpetuity of divine kingship is illustrated in the ritual of transfiguration; the past king Horus is transformed into his father Osiris. The next king, through the performance of various rituals at his coronation, 'becomes' and is named Horus. The eternal and divine natures of the kas of kingship are present in all past, present and future kings. See also the wooden ka-figure of King Hor (Fig.9). Similarly, Pyr. 1653 is one of many texts which describe the eternal royal unity with the gods: 'O Atum, set your arms about the King, about this construction, and about this pyramid as the arms of a ka-symbol, that the king's essence may be in it, enduring for ever'. The hieroglyph image of the 'extended-arm' ka-symbol 𓂏 is here metaphorically described as an embrace 𓂏, believed to be the origin of the 'extended-arm' hieroglyph.³⁸

Although the text and iconography in the New Kingdom tomb of Tutankhamun indicated the rituals which ensured the immortality of the king, the

³⁷ For colour symbolism see Richard H. Wilkinson, *Symbolic and Magic in Ancient Egyptian Art*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999), 108. See also Desroches-Noblecourt, *Tutankhamun*, 259.

³⁸ For the ka-glyph '𓂏' above the head of the ka of Tutankhamun (3rd figure) and the embrace-glyph '𓂏' between the Horus king Tutankhamun and his Osiris form (1st and 2nd figures), see Fig.6. On the ka glyph, see Allen, *Middle Egyptian*, 80; Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art*, 50-51.

Egyptian people in general were also provided with a similar transformation into their Netherworld. A brief reference to this text will confirm not only the historic continuity of the Opening the Mouth ritual but also that the naming process was more important to the ancient Egyptian concept of existence than in modern societies.³⁹ The so-called ‘democratization’ of immortality for everyone was dependant on whether the family could ‘afford’ a stock version of the papyrus with the Osiris-N format; later the actual name replaced the ‘N’. Equally, the proviso was whether the people could ‘afford’ a scribe and artist to create a personal version.

Everyone therefore was offered a place amongst the gods with the condition that they had within their ‘house of gold’, the modern named papyrus, *Book of the Dead*. The papyrus held the answers to the questions posed by the gods and signified a form of guarantee of an eternal existence.⁴⁰ The book of *Coming Forth by Day* was divided into approximately two hundred Chapters named variously, Utterances, Recitations, ‘Spells’ or ‘Incantations’. They guaranteed the Osiris-N a place in the Netherworld, provided that he or she was in possession of the papyrus, *Coming Forth by Day*.⁴¹ Here is a further example of naming and classifying data within a modern context rather than from the insider view of the adherent.

The Egyptians named the papyri to accompany them into the Netherworld, *Coming Forth by Day*; it describes clearly their intention that they expected a continued existence in both the earthly and supernatural world. The inappropriately named *The Book of the Dead* demonstrates an evident difference in meaning.⁴² An immediate disparity is discerned between the two titles. The active movement implied by the words ‘coming forth’ indicates the authorial intent of the Egyptians

³⁹ The hacking out of the names of deities during the reign of Akhenaten signified the importance placed by the Egyptians in the naming process. The removal of the names from temple inscriptions indicated that the person ‘ceased to exist’. See also chapter four, 138,n.92.

⁴⁰ The books of *Coming Forth by Day* of Ani and Hunefer are two examples of texts recovered from their respective coffins.

⁴¹ The earliest papyri, more appropriately named the book of *Coming Forth by Day* date to the mid-fifteenth century, BCE.

⁴² The German Egyptologist Karl Richard Lepsius, who coined the phrase, *Totenbuch* (*The Book of the Dead*), published a selection of translations in 1842. On the whole, the traditional title *Book of the Dead*, continues to be used although, increasingly today, the title is qualified with the alternative title, the book of *Coming Forth by Day*. Cf. Faulkner’s, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, was re-published in 1994 under the new title, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead: The Book of Going Forth by Day*.



Fig.7 The *ba*- bird returns down the shaft to the mummified form of its owner. After Frankfort.

that they expected a superhuman form of existence. The concept of Osiris-N in his or her *ba*-form leaving and returning to the 'house of gold' each evening indicates an active participation in the earthly world (Fig.7).⁴³ See also (Fig.10) which depicts the *ba* of the Royal Scribe Ani hovering over the mummified Osiris Ani.⁴⁴ The contrast between the passive finality of the modern terms 'funerary' and 'death' demonstrates clearly the absence of such a context in the Egyptian ethos.

A brief textual example may suffice from the papyrus of Osiris Ani. In Chapter 68 of the book of *Coming Forth by Day* Osiris Ani is described 'going out into the day': 'The doors of the earth are opened for me, the door-bolts of Geb [the earth god] are opened for me,

the shutters of the sky-windows are thrown open for me...I go out into the day to the place where I desire to be'. The text continues with an unknown god granting Osiris Ani, 'Power' in his heart, in his arms, in his legs, in his mouth, in all his members, and over his invocation-offerings. The chapter concludes with affirmation from the gods that Osiris Ani 'shall walk on earth among the living and he shall never suffer destruction'.⁴⁵ Chapter 71 reveals the importance of 'naming' and the knowledge given to Osiris Ani contained in the book of *Coming Forth by Day*. 'I know you, I know your names; may you know me just as I know your names'.⁴⁶ The chapter ends with the familiar phrase, 'A matter, million times true'.

The following chapters from the papyrus of Osiris Ani follow the same format as the Opening the Mouth ritual of King Unis. Chapter 22 is entitled, 'For giving a mouth to Osiris', and the words are spoken by Osiris Ani: 'My mouth has been given to me that I may speak ... for I am Osiris'. The texts of Chapter 23 with

⁴³ After Frankfort, *Kingship*, Fig.22, 'The ba descending the tomb shaft to go to the Mummy'.

⁴⁴ British Museum 10470. Hieroglyphic funerary papyrus of the Royal Scribe, Accounting Scribe for Divine Offerings of all the gods, Overseer of the Granaries, Ani. Nineteenth dynasty, c1250 BCE.

⁴⁵ Faulkner, *BD*, 69-70. Chapter 68 is one of many references to the Osiris N going out into the day. See also Chapters 9-13, 68, 71, 72. I have used the more positive term 'chapter' rather than the term 'spell' used by Faulkner.

⁴⁶ Faulkner, *BD*, 72.



Fig. 8 Opening the Mouth ritual
Papyrus Hunefer. British Museum



Fig. 9 Above. Life-size wooden ka statue of King Hor⁴⁷



Fig. 10 Below. The *ba* and mummified Ani.
Papyrus Ani EA10470/35 British Museum.

the heading ‘for opening the mouth of ‘N’ is a similar personal utterance: ‘My mouth is opened, my mouth is split opened by Shu with that iron harpoon of his with which has split open the mouth of the gods’.⁴⁸ The *ba*, often translated as the soul, hovers above the mummified form of Ani (Fig. 10),⁴⁹ whether leaving or returning to Ani through the shaft of the ‘house of gold’ (Fig. 7). The royal *ka*-figure of King Hor (Fig. 9) displays the same *ka* sign as Tutankhamun (Fig. 6).

More may be gleaned from the named papyrus of another non-royal, the King’s Scribe, Osiris Hunefer.⁵⁰ He is depicted in a similar vignette to that of Tutankhamun although the papyrus of Hunefer provides more detailed visual information of the ritual (Fig. 8). For example, the erect mummified form of Hunefer is held by the god Anubis, behind the offerings the sem-priest in leopard skin robe holds a sensor. The stela behind Anubis shows Hunefer praising Osiris; behind the

⁴⁷ The *ka*-statue of the 13th dynasty Middle Kingdom king, Aui-be-Ra Hor. JE30948. Cairo Museum.

⁴⁸ Faulkner, *BD*, 51–52. See also Chapters 54–59 for breathing. In the Egyptian creation myth of Atum, Shu was the god of air; his presence is significant in the Opening the Mouth ritual in that in order for humans to live they must breathe the air of Shu. See also Allen, *Middle Egyptian*, 55.

⁴⁹ See 44.

⁵⁰ British Museum.EA9901 sheet 5, funerary papyrus of the Royal Scribe, Scribe for Divine Offerings, Hunefer. Nineteenth dynasty, c1275 BCE.

stela is the doorway of the chapel of the 'house of gold' from which the *ba* of Osiris Hunefer may emerge into the day.⁵¹

The upraised arms of the 'mourners', the wife and daughter of Hunefer agree in pose to the textual description in the Pyramid Texts of the upraised arms of the mourning goddesses Isis and Nephthys. Similar also to the textual description of Unis is the upright, mummified Hunefer outside his 'house of gold'. A like attired sem-priest in leopard-skin robe performs the Opening the Mouth ritual. Both Osiris Ani and Osiris Hunefer participate in a ritual previously the prerogative of kings; now non-royals emulate the ritual so that they too may enjoy a similar supernatural existence.

Further, the texts and iconography presented testify also to the socio-political aspects of the Egyptians: the power of the king was evident, for the Egyptians to achieve life in the supernatural world it was necessary to emulate the rituals of the king. The text and iconography inform us of the social role of women as 'official' mourners also that the eldest son acts as the sem-priest following the royal ritual. The images and texts depict actual rituals enacted by the living on behalf of the transfigured beings. The offerings are made 'symbolically' by the eldest son,⁵² whether royal or non-royal, and textually describe and image the beneficiary, the *ka*, the father, whether Unis, Tutankhamun, Hunefer or Ani. The father-son motif links the living and the supernatural.

Truth claims are also evident. When an unidentified god testifies to the 'truth' of his words, 'A matter a million times true', neither Ani nor Hunefer would consider the validity or otherwise of this statement.⁵³ From the adherent's perspective the written word was verification of their truth claim.⁵⁴ That the same gods and similar rituals are present in both the royal and non-royal Opening the Mouth ritual implies that non-royals emulate royal rituals to achieve the state-approved promise of

⁵¹ The lower register of Papyrus Hunefer depicts the ritual tools for Opening the Mouth as well as a cow with her calf. The traditional offering of the foreleg shows evidence of blood flowing from a leg torn from the calf's living form.

⁵² For example, Tutankhamun was not the actual 'father' of the king who succeeded him neither was Ay the son of Tutankhamun. In the process of maintaining the function of the ritual, the father-son primogeniture discussed earlier, is maintained.

⁵³ Faulkner, *BD*, 70. This line closes *BD*, chapter 68.

⁵⁴ The Egyptian 'Negative Confession' is an example of the concept of the written word as validation.

‘democratized’ immortality. Equally, as the Horus-king was transfigured into the Osiris-king, non-royals underwent similar transformations - they too ‘became’ Osiris. Again the naming process carries considerable significance.

To emphasise the importance of the Opening the Mouth ritual my penultimate re-appraisal of textual and archaeological evidence describes the Opening the Mouth ritual texts of a first century C.E. papyrus, *The Liturgy for Opening the Mouth for Breathing*.⁵⁵ The time period is over one thousand years after the time of Tutankhamun, three thousand years after the historical era of Egyptian history began. I mentioned previously the names ‘Spells’ or ‘Incantations’ given by scholars to sections of the texts in the book of *Coming Forth by Day*. I have argued that such modern classifications may carry a less positive meaning than the name given to the Recitations by the Egyptians. Similarly, although I chose to use the term ‘chapter’, its neutrality fails to convey the authorial intent of the scribe-priests. The uttering of the words in the chapters are the means which initiate the transfiguration process.

Accordingly, the Egyptian term *s3h.w*, meaning ‘glorifications’ or ‘transfigurations’, not only implies a continued existence of some merit rather than a sudden departure from an earthly life, it is also indicative of the precise meaning intended by the ancient Egyptians.⁵⁶ The ancient Egyptians believed that the purpose of the texts was to restore the mental and physical faculties of the Osiris N in order to achieve a superhuman existence in the Afterlife. The term *sakhu* (*s3h.w*) is the causative means, the texts and rituals incorporated into the ritual of the Opening the Mouth. The *akh* (*3h*) or ‘light’, is the indefinable ‘spirit’ or being, named Osiris N because he or she possesses the knowledge contained within the book of *Coming Forth by Day*. Therefore all whose name is prefixed with the name Osiris is justified, ‘true of voice’, they become one of the many *akhs* (*3h.w*), who exist in the horizon, the *akhet* (*3h.t*). The text therefore offers its own validation that the presence of Osiris-N in the Netherworld is justified.

⁵⁵ See Smith, *The Liturgy of Opening the Mouth*. The main papyri discussed by Smith are P. Berlin 8351, P. Louvre E10605, P. Louvre 10607, P. Strasbourg 3 verso.

⁵⁶ See Smith, *The Liturgy of Opening the Mouth*, and his research on the Papyrus Berlin 8351 and other related papyri. Smith proposed that the term *sakhu*, ‘glorification(s)’, was not a description of the ritual rather the means of transition, 7. Similarly, Loprieno in *Defining Egyptian Literature* interpreted the term as ‘transfiguration’, 48.



Fig.11 A detail from the false door of Mehu, Keeper of the Diadem, Overseer of the Two Offices of the Royal Insignia, Overseer of all Judges from his Mastaba at Sakkara, 6th dynasty, Old Kingdom. The *ka* of Mehu is seated before his offerings.⁵⁷

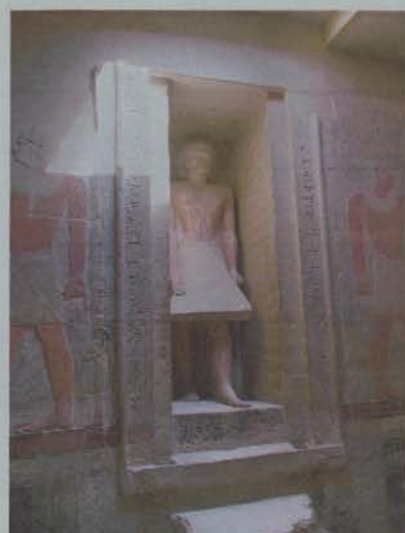


Fig.12 From the Mastaba of Mereruka, Sakkara
Copyright Jon Bodsworth

I have demonstrated that the rituals described in the book of *Coming Forth by Day*, of which the Opening the Mouth ritual formed part, were recited by the priest who acted on behalf of the eldest son whether royal or non-royal.⁵⁸ The ritual began with a call to the ‘inert’ owner of the ‘house of gold’ to ‘awaken’ and ‘be renewed’. The earthly form of existence was transfigured, the body was ‘revived’, accepted into the company of the gods; the transformed ‘beings’ experienced eternal freedom of movement throughout the cosmos, whether in the sky or on the earth.⁵⁹ The ‘*sakhu*’ texts named by the Egyptians, ‘glorifications’ or ‘transformations’, described the intertwined and interdependent key rituals of ‘rejuvenation’ and ‘offering’:

[the individual] is rejuvenated ... his mouth is opened ... his eyes see ... his ears are open ... his lips speak ... his heart functions ... his limbs are firm ... and his bones knit together ... The individual is purified,

⁵⁷ Picture Credit: Schultz and Seidel, eds., *Egypt*, 83.

⁵⁸ The recitation of the texts implies the importance of the ancient Egyptian concept of ‘naming’ in association with, what is named, ‘coming into existence’. The creation ‘myth’ of Ptah discussed earlier, described the naming process and its significance to existence.

⁵⁹ For various texts that relate to transformation, see Walter Federn, ‘The “Transformation” in the Coffin Texts’, in *JNES*, 19, 1960:241-257; Wente, ‘Mysticism in Pharaonic Egypt?’, 41.

nourished and clothed by means of a series of offerings. ...incense ...
water ... beer ... bread and loaves ... linen and cloth ...⁶⁰

Offerings of food, drink and linen mentioned in the Pyramid Texts were also part of the rituals in the book of *Coming Forth by Day* discussed earlier, an essential part of the 'transformation' rituals. Archaeological evidence depicts the owner of the subterranean Houses of Gold with a chapel above ground containing a *ka*-statue or relief of Osiris N to which offerings were made by the living.⁶¹ The focal point of the chapel was a niche with a "false door" and an offering table located on the west wall; the 'transfigured spirit' or *ka* of Mereruka emerges from the false door to 'partake' of the nourishment offered (Fig.12). The *ka* of Mehu, vizier under King Pepi I, is depicted on his false door enjoying his offerings (Fig.11). The false door of Mehu through which his *ka*-form enters to receive the offerings given to him, also includes a textual request for offerings to be brought to Mehu on every festival and feast day in the length of eternity.⁶²

The various 'transformation' rituals performed by the priest not only restored aspects of the physical abilities of the transfigured being, they also conjoined with the various 'supernatural' forces. The reunion allowed the human-headed *ba*, the soul (Figs.7,10) to be released from the mummified form to rejoin the symbolic *ka*-form, the life-force (Fig.9). The new non-physical being was transformed into an *akh*, a 'transfigured spirit' or 'light'. An example of one of many texts which described the freedom of the *akh* to relate spiritually to those who continued to live in a worldly existence:

⁶⁰ P. Berlin 8351 quoted in Smith, *The Liturgy of Opening the Mouth*, 16-17. The Papyrus is dated to the early first century AD. See earlier periods of the Opening Mouth rituals from the Old Kingdom to the New Kingdom in Ann Macy Roth, 'The *Peseshkef* and the 'Opening of the Mouth' ceremony: a ritual of birth and rebirth', *JEA*, 78, 1992:113-147; Bjerke, '*Opening the Mouth*'. For archaeological evidence of the New Kingdom ritual, see the tombs at Thebes, of Rekhmire, Gurna; Seti I, KV17; Tutankhamun, KV62; for the later 26th dynasty see the chapel of Amenirdis at Medina Habu, Thebes.

⁶¹ See Quirke, *Ancient Egyptian Religion*, 152.

⁶² The annual festivals of, for example, the Feast of Sokar and The Beautiful Feast of the Valley are examples of the bonds which unite the living and those in a 'transfigured' state. The rituals reaffirmed family bonds whether royal or non-royal. See Murnane, *Ancient Egypt*, 76.

The one who knows these secret designs is an outfitted *akh*. He goes out and comes in within the netherworld. He speaks to the living - truly attested a million times.⁶³

Only then was the *ba* empowered to emerge daily through the false door and return to his 'house of gold' at night (Fig.7).⁶⁴ The 'beings' who were transfigured from their mundane earthly form are named by the living as 'those who have gone to their *kas*'. Here is a clear indication of a belief in an infinite supernatural existence, rather than a finite non-existence in the modern concept of the terms 'funerary' and 'death'.⁶⁵

I conclude this section with a brief reference to a key offering ritual, an essential part of the Opening the Mouth ceremony. Its continued survival throughout Egypt's historic era testifies to a belief of considerable magnitude. The 'offering formula', *hṯp di nsw* traditionally described as 'an offering which the king gives ... to the *Ka* of ... ' *n k3 n*, was followed by the titles and name of, for example, the *ka* of the Royal Scribe Hunefer. The formula indicated that all non-royals were subject to the king's favour and reliant on the patronage of the king for an ongoing existence in the Netherworld.

Alternatively, it may be interpreted that the earthly king alone contained the Power to communicate with the gods, in that all offerings are made to gods, most often Anubis or Osiris. For example, the top three lines of the false door of Mehu begin, 'an offering which the king gives to Anubis', following in the second line with 'an offering which the king gives to Osiris'. The third line states 'an offering which the king gives'; all offering formulae end with a description of the actual offerings.

Accordingly, when the son of Hunefer offers sustenance to the *ka* of Osiris Hunefer, offerings may be received only through the office of kingship with the appropriate words, 'an offering which the king gives', for example, to Osiris. Consequently, as reigning kings made offerings to past kings in their own name as a Horus son offers to his Osiris father, the Egyptian people through the process of emulating royal rituals in son-father offerings did so only in the name of the king.

⁶³ Wente, 'Mysticism in Pharaonic Egypt?', 166. This is one of numerous examples quoted by Wente of the ancient Egyptians belief in a continued existence.

⁶⁴ See Hornung, *Conceptions*, 61. Hornung interpreted the *ba* as a 'divine being'.

⁶⁵ Allen, *Middle Egyptian*, 95.

Thus texts and iconography evidence that the Egyptian people were dependent on the Power of kingship not only for their daily sustenance but also in maintaining their familial ancestral ties in Eternity. The liaison mentioned earlier between the king and his people, and the king and the pantheon of gods is a constant reminder of the active nature of the reciprocal relationship between the living and the supernatural, the transfigured beings who helped to maintain the stability of the state of Egypt.

It is not my intention either to read more into the texts than the Egyptians intended or to make claims of certainty for my interpretation of ancient Egyptian rituals, rather to offer theories which may provide further research. Nonetheless the textual and archaeological evidence presented suggests that the Opening the Mouth ceremony with the key ritual offerings demonstrated an active inter-relationship appropriate to the genre 'transfiguration'; rather than the modern typology 'funerary'.

Given that the ritual of the Opening the Mouth was present in all periods of Egyptian history, I propose that this fact demonstrates not only a Power constancy of some longevity, but also a steadfast ideology in a socio-political liaison between the king and his people and the king and the gods. Consequently, I argue that given the importance in which the Egyptians held the naming principle, the passive and inappropriate term, 'funerary' with its association with finality and death, fails to provide the meaning the Egyptians intended. In the final analysis, to claim that 'transfiguration' texts may be described in terms of 'myth' or 'religion' is not only to turn aside from the evidence presented, but also to deviate from the meaning intended by the ancient Egyptians.

Finally, a brief re-appraisal of the remaining texts is required, if only to substantiate further my hypothesis of the importance of understanding texts from the insider view. The conclusion which follows this section seeks to propose not only a re-interpretation of the inter-related nature of Egyptian texts but also the problem of isolating one type of text, whether or not given the name 'myth', from texts as a whole. This is not to deny the importance of the phenomenological method of first classifying texts into different types. My research has shown that although this may be the initial step, to understand the texts fully from the insider ancient Egyptian

view the final re-examination merits an inter-textual analysis. Thus it is important that ‘transfiguration’ texts are re-united contextually.

6.4.3 Naming and Classifying Types: ‘Instruction’ Texts

In the previous section I evaluated ‘transfiguration’ texts with some rigour and demonstrated that the term ‘funerary’ texts failed to convey the meaning intended by the Egyptians. In this section less rigour is required for the next group of texts, because ‘instruction’ texts, quantitatively the second majority group is similar to the name given by the Egyptians, ‘instruction’ texts, *sb3yt*.⁶⁶ Like the ‘transfiguration’ texts discussed in the previous section, ‘instruction’ texts not only include other genres within the same classification, they also have distinct profiles.⁶⁷ Where ‘transfiguration’ texts appeared ritualistic in that they concerned the transformation from one type of being to another, ‘instruction’ literary texts appear as an Egyptian response to the universal question of human beings: ‘How should I live?’ Thus ‘instruction’ literary texts clearly have a beginning, middle and an end and include for example, ‘instructions for right living in society’, ‘royal testaments to right rule’, ‘laments on socio-political disorder’, ‘loyalist instructions for loyalty and devotion to the king’ and ‘autobiographies’. If they have a beginning, middle and an end and to some degree concern supernatural beings, the question is, are they ‘myths’?

My point in including ‘instruction’ literature is to demonstrate the inter-contextual nature of Egyptian texts, that general ‘instruction’ texts from non-royal elite officials related advice from respected elders to their sons or juniors on ‘right living’. For example, this can be seen in works similar to the ‘Instructions of Ptahhotep’, a vizier who seeks retirement from his royal office and proposes to the king, his son as his successor. Instruction texts, the core of which concerns appropriate behaviour in keeping with royal protocol, offer brief statements of Ptahhotep’s status; he is described as ‘beloved of the god [the king]’.⁶⁸ Equally,

⁶⁶ Lichtheim is one of many scholars who identify Egyptian ‘instructions’ as ‘literary texts’.

⁶⁷ See Lichtheim, *AEL*, Vol.1:134-135; Lichtheim, ‘Didactic Literature’, in *AELHF*, 243-244; Simpson, *Literature of Ancient Egypt*; Parkinson, *Voices*.

⁶⁸ On ancient Egyptian society see Allen, *Middle Egyptian*, 31. Little is known about the ordinary people of Egyptian society; our knowledge of Egyptian society in general is limited. Most of the iconography and inscriptions studied by Egyptologists were produced for temples and tombs of kings and their officials. Allen suggested our knowledge reflected only 10% of the population although he considered this small percentage of elites were ‘fairly representative of Egyptian society’.

‘royal testaments’ instruct their sons in state politics and ‘right rule’; the ‘Instruction for Merikare’ is a political testament on how to rule.⁶⁹ The name of Maat or the phrases ‘right living’ and ‘right rule’ mentioned within either genre of texts implies compliance with the principles of the goddess Maat.

Instruction texts named as ‘laments’ had a political dimension. They berated and deposed the social order and depicted a de-centralised Egypt, a diminished Power of kingship and demonstrated the absence of the concept of Maat in Egyptian society.⁷⁰ ‘Loyalty’ instructions, the counterparts of the ‘laments’ acclaimed the benefactions of kingship from loyal officials. Royal ‘Power’, reminiscent of van der Leeuw’s concept of ‘awe’, appeared menacing with an ultimatum: if one obeyed and *loved the king* who had divine knowledge and power, then a life in eternity would be realised.⁷¹ Such texts serve to emphasise the inter-relationship of texts in general. For example, in the ‘transfiguration’ texts the power of the king was absolute, whether or not to maintain offerings to the *kas* of non-royals to ensure their continued existence.

‘Biographical’ texts by the elite non-royals emulated earlier royal declarations discussed in the previous section. They described the social ideal that their elite owners had ‘fed the hungry’, ‘clothed the naked’, and lived righteously according to the principles of Maat.⁷² Most non-royal texts included a statement of royal support, ‘I am one honoured by the king’ juxtaposed with phrases of doing ‘the

⁶⁹ Lichtheim, ‘Didactic Literature’, 247.

⁷⁰ See *The Admonitions of Ipuwer* known also as the *Lament of Ipuwer*, Papyrus Leiden 344, Recto, Translated by Lichtheim, *AEL*. Vol. 1: 149-163.

⁷¹ See Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 172-4. The 12th dynasty Loyalist Instruction from the Sehetepibre Stela instructs the author’s children on the design for eternity and a way of living in peace in the world. One must ‘adore the king’: ‘He is Perception. He is Re’, he makes the land green; he fills the Two Lands with victory and life. The king gives nourishment, feeds those who follow his path. ‘The king is *Ka*’; ‘He is Khnum’; ‘He is Bastet who protects the Two Lands’. The inscription concludes with the words, ‘The one whom the king loves shall be a well-provided spirit; there is no tomb for anyone who rebels against His Majesty... Do this and your body will flourish ... for eternity’. The counsel to his children from the sage Sehetepibre relates a royal Power of some force.

⁷² See Lichtheim, *Maat*, 10. Lichtheim translates and interprets a large selection of Biographical texts from the early 5th dynasty to the Ptolemaic period. The presence and concept of the goddess Maat was therefore evident in Egyptian society for most of Egypt’s historical era. Lichtheim interprets the function of Maat as ‘doing Maat’, the motivation is stated tersely: ‘the god loves/desires it, and “it is the good”’. See also David B. O’Connor, ‘Beloved of Maat, the Horizon of Re: The Royal Palace in New Kingdom Egypt’, in *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*, 263-300.

right which the god [the king] loves'.⁷³ Instruction texts described not only the way to live an orderly existence in society, they also described periods of political chaos when order was absent. Right living signified that the populace should live according to the principles of the goddess Maat; her absence indicated chaos. Equally, the principles of Maat were key requirements of royal rule. Rather than to *live* according to Maat, the premise of kingship was to rule and defend Egypt with her principles; absence implied societal chaos.⁷⁴

'Instruction' literary texts incorporated a variety of texts; each genre signified an aspect that related to the chaos or stability of the state of Egypt. Kingship was the key motif of stability. The king is also described in texts as a god and, like the goddess Maat, the divine element in texts was the universal directive for right rule and right living. In the 'transfiguration' texts the *kas* of the divine beings were dependent on offerings from the Horus king for their survival in the Netherworld. Equally, the king who failed to rule according to Maat caused the demise of order; the failure to provide offerings led to non-existence of the *kas* in Eternity. Thus the institution of the state of Egypt depended on the office of kingship to maintain *social* order amongst the populace and *political* stability in the land of Egypt in both the earthly and cosmic worlds.

In the final analysis, in order to understand the Egyptian naming principle in relation to kingship, it is necessary to acknowledge the functioning value of the Egyptian written word as they understood it. Thus as a conclusion, I offer as a final test case, an incantation text named variously, *Isis and the Name of Ra*, or *The God and his Unknown Name of Power*, a text often referred to as 'myth'.⁷⁵

6.5 Phenomenology from the Inside: 'Myth' Revisited Again

Throughout my thesis I have emphasised the importance to the ancient Egyptians of the 'naming' principle, whether as a brief textual reference to a deity or the significance of 'naming' an entity into existence. I have established the presence of superhuman beings in some measure within the texts examined and within the

⁷³ From the 6th dynasty Sakkara tomb of the vizier, Kagemni, quoted in Lichtheim, *Maat*, 12. See also Lichtheim's interpretation, when the term 'god' follows immediately after mention of the king, it is normal usage to interpret the text as 'the king is a god', 15.

⁷⁴ The premise of kingship was that he had to rule according to the principles of *Maat*.

⁷⁵ Cf. John Wilson, 'Unknown Name', 12; Quirke, *Ancient Egyptian Religion*, 12.

context of the office of kingship. My aim has centred on the issue of whether or not the so-called universal term 'myth' may be classified as a typology of 'religion' in ancient Egyptian texts.

It is not my intention to deny the existence in modern societies of the fact of 'religion' as a functioning belief system with shared doctrines and rituals, public worship whether in churches, temples, synagogues or mosques.⁷⁶ Instead my aim has been to establish the absence of these features of 'religion' in ancient Egyptian texts. Equally, in the classification of 'myth' as a typology of religion, it is not my intent to vouch for its absence in texts generally, but to acknowledge the scant proportion of texts designated 'myth' by some Egyptologists. As I understand ancient Egyptian beliefs, the modern overlay of the terms 'religion' and 'myth' on Egyptian texts constitutes a challenge to phenomenology and the fundamental principle of the Egyptian naming process.

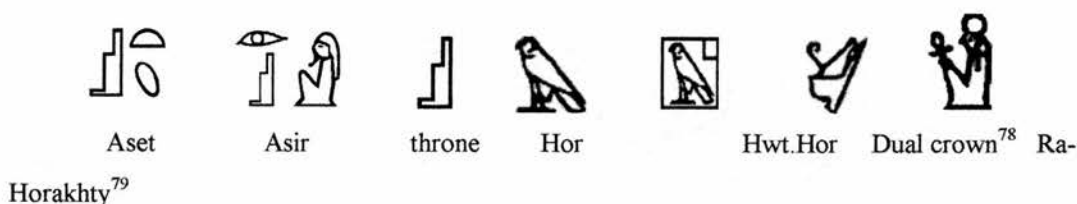
I return to my final test, the scrutiny of the incantation 'myth', *The God and his Unknown Name of Power*. My aim is to examine this text vigorously as a test case to ascertain whether or not one text may be extricated from other texts and in its isolation provide information of the key motif of Egyptian kingship. In addition, given the premise of the Egyptian naming principle, in order to progress further inside the ethos of the ancient Egyptians, I intend to replace the traditional Greek names with the Egyptian names in an approximate phonetic interpretation. Following the 'thinking' of the ancient Egyptian, if the uttering of the name of a deity causes its character and Power to 'come into existence' then the Egyptian name of the deity is the signifier rather than the foreign Greek name.

For example, the conventional Greek names 'Isis' and 'Osiris' fail to realise the interrelationship demonstrated in their Egyptian names 'Aset', and 'Asir' (Fig. 13). Both names contain the hieroglyph 'throne' or 'seat'. Their son, the royal falcon god, Hor⁷⁷ is depicted in iconography wearing the double crown of Egypt (Fig. 13) and Hor is the name given to each king at his coronation. In the Egyptian

⁷⁶ Cf. Frank Whaling, ed., *Religion in today's World*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1987). Following Wilfred Cantwell Smith, the word 'tradition' replaces the word 'religion'. See also Ninian Smart, *Dimensions of the Sacred*, (London: Harper Collins, 1996).

⁷⁷ I now use the Egyptian Hor (*hr*) for the Greek-named Horus – the designation Heru (*hrw*) used in chapter two was the Horus name for the king in the Pyramid Texts. It is not known why the name of the king ceased as Heru; this is another source for further research.

Fig.13



naming process, each king is manifest as the god Hor. Finally, Asir the ruler of the Netherworld is the ‘father’ of Hor, the reigning king. The Egyptian named triad Asir-Aset-Hor signifies a fluid relationship which concerns kingship, the throne and the crowns of Egypt; their names are symbolised in their hieroglyphs (Fig. 13) and their iconography (Fig. 14).

Equally important is the link of the royal falcon in the iconography of the very ancient partnership of Hor king (Horus) and Hwt.Hor (Hathor), the goddess of the house of Hor. Hwt.Hor is often considered an earlier mother of Hor and the close bond is signified in their hieroglyphs. Significant also is the sun god Ra and Hor who conjoin in the form of the god Ra-Horakhty. Incorporating the Egyptian names Aset, Asir, and Hor in my final analysis may serve as a small step towards the phenomenological criterion of examining a culture from the adherent’s perception whilst simultaneously employing the Egyptian iconic imagery. Frankfort explained: ‘An example of the coalescence of a symbol and the thing it stands for is the treating of a person’s name as an essential part of him – as it were, in a way, identical with him’.⁸⁰ Wyatt agreed: ‘Names were an essential part of a person. Erase the name, as in Egyptian rituals, and the consequence was “his name is not; he is not!”’⁸¹ For

⁷⁸ Although the hieroglyph does not depict Hor wearing the *pschent* or double crown, he is seen with his crowns in his iconography in temples and ‘houses of gold’ (Fig. 14).

⁷⁹ Ra-Horakhty, a character in the incantation text being discussed, is the god of the Two Horizons, the East and the West; he is the dual form of the sun god Ra and Hor united in their dual positions on the throne of the *akhet*. The name describes the function: Ra + Hor on the throne of the Two Horizons; *Ra + Hor + akhet + y*, the key connection of which is kingship. As the sun sets and rises each day the reigning king is ‘reborn’ at each daily rising. On the sun in all creation, see Stephen Quirke, *The Cult of Ra, Sun Worship in Ancient Egypt*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 2001), 30-31; on the arcane knowledge of kingship, 52-54.

⁸⁰ Frankfort *et al*, *The Intellectual Adventure*, 13. See also John Wilson’s comment in ‘The God and his Unknown Name of Power’, *ANET*, 12-14, that the name was an element of personality and of power’, 12.

⁸¹ Wyatt, *Mythic Mind*, 38.

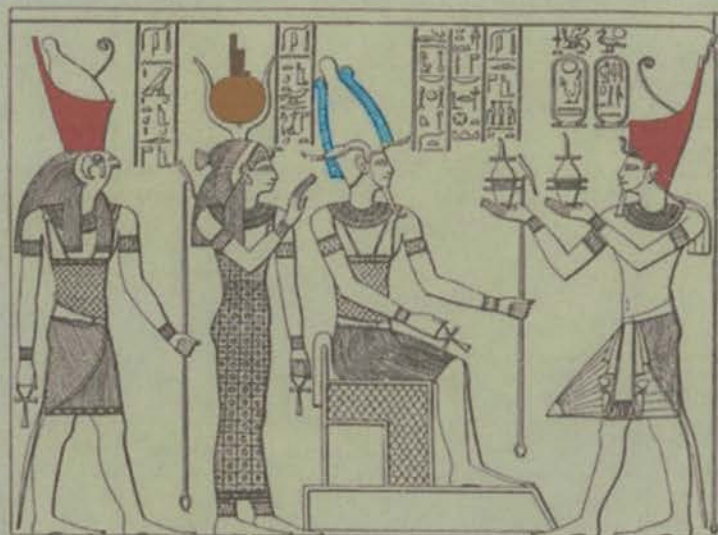


Fig.14 The Abydos triad of Asir-Aset-Hor from the Temple of Seti I, Abydos. From the left, the royal falcon-headed god, Hor who wears the *pschent*, the Red and White double crown of Egypt, stands behind his mother Aset offering approval of Seti I. She wears the Hwt-Hor (Hathor) cow-horns as well as the sun-disc; the latter signifies her role as the 'daughter' of the sun god Ra. She also carries on top of the sun-disc, the iconography of the throne which designates her name, Aset.

Seated on the Aset throne is her brother-consort, Asir. He wears the Atef crown part of which comprises the White Crown. He receives offerings from king Seti who wears the Red crown and is identified by his cartouche.

Each section of text begins: *qd mdw n hr*, *qd mdw n Aset*, *qd mdw n Asir*.

example, the destruction of names, a practice evident in the Amarna period discussed earlier, signified the elimination of that person, whether god or king; the erased names are 'reinstated' by later kings and their existence 'returns'.⁸² Thus the naming ritual was of some significance to the ancient Egyptians. Griffiths' comment is succinct: 'To the ancients *nomen* implied *numen*'.⁸³

The ancient Egyptians did not only describe their 'truths' in words but also in symbolic iconography the purpose of which was to 'make real' their ideology. The Metternich stela, on which is inscribed one of the many versions of the 'myth' being revisited in this section, depicts Hor as the central character rather than Aset, who is generally described textually as the protagonist in the incantation 'myth'. My premise is that in order to understand texts from the insider view, comprehension of the *characteristics* and *purpose* of the presence of the deities within Egyptian texts was an important criterion towards understanding the authorial intent of the ancient writers.

In the previous section I suggested that when a brief reference was made to a deity in texts, knowledge of the character of the deity was important to the understanding of the textual context. The brief *textual* reference to Hor in the so-called incantation 'myth' examined in this section fails to indicate why the figure of Hor is the key figure on the Metternich Stela and 'Horus' cippi in general (Figs.22,

⁸² See chapter four 138. n.92 for the erasing of the names of the gods and subsequent re-instatement.

⁸³ Griffiths, *Origins of Osiris*, 107

22).⁸⁴ Thus a subjective-objective reappraisal of the incantation text coupled with data gleaned from previous texts in my research as well as archaeological data, may explain to some extent, the presence of Hor as the central figure on the many Egyptian cippi.⁸⁵

To maintain the phenomenological integrity of my thesis the Greek names of Isis, Osiris and Horus will be referred to as Aset, Asir, and Hor and for clarity, the Greek names Isis, Osiris and Horus will be used when referenced so by scholars. For example, to maintain coherence I will refer to ‘Horus cippi’ rather than Hor cippi. Other names are generally true to those of the Egyptians. On their first introduction, reference to names are accompanied with their hieroglyph rendering and afterwards only when I seek to emphasise an aspect of the iconography or an interrelationship of value.

6.5.1 *The God and his Unknown Name of Power*⁸⁶

The text to be examined was communicated not as a literary text but contained within the genre of incantations and remedies against snake bites and scorpion stings of which there are many variations.⁸⁷ I posit that the ‘incantation’ text, often described as ‘myth’, follows a similar format to the texts discussed earlier, that they indicate the Power of kingship, although the reference may be brief and obscure. Joris F. Borghouts suggested that ‘scorpion and snake-spell myths have a much more straightforward purpose – which does not mean that they lack sophistication – and in them, if anywhere, the plasticity of myth is most

⁸⁴ For information on the Metternich Stela and other *cippi* see Nora E. Scott, ‘Metternich Stela’, *MMAB*, 9, 1951, 201-217; Kamyar Abdi, ‘An Egyptian Cippus of Horus in the Iran National Museum, Tehran’, *JNES*, 61, 2002, 203-10; and Allen, ‘Cosmology’, 103-16. In the next section the traditional name ‘Horus’ will be used when discussing Horus cippi.





⁸⁵ Kristensen believed that in studying the data of many religions they ‘shed light on the few’.

⁸⁶ For the various versions see John Wilson, ‘The God and his Unknown Name of Power’, *ANET*, 12-14; E.A. Wallis Budge, ‘The Legend of Ra and Isis’ in *The Gods of the Egyptians*, (New York: Dover, 1969), 372-87; For translation and transliteration of the text, see McDowell, *Life in Ancient Egypt*, 118-120.

⁸⁷ From the Middle Kingdom onwards incantations were used as healing strategies of, for example, snake bites or scorpion stings. The so-called ‘myth’ of ‘The God and his Unknown Name of Power’, also known as ‘Isis and the name of Re’, was found on several Rameside sources; the surviving sources come from Deir el Medina. For sources, see <http://www.digitalegypt.ucl.ac.uk>: Papyrus Turin 1993, Papyrus Chester Beatty 11 (one of a group), and ostrakon from Deir el Medina 1263. See also the Metternich Stela c.400 BCE and other cippi.

transparent'.⁸⁸ Similarly, Kemp proposed: 'Texts of this nature recorded only on papyrus, were the speculative literary products of the scribal elite, part didactic, part entertaining, not meant as statements of theology'.⁸⁹ Kemp cited the 'scorpion' incantation as an example of this textual genre.

Although the translation of pertinent phrases and scholars' interpretations will be discussed, my overall aim is first a subjective view, to draw out from the incantation text, where possible, the meaning intended by the priest-scribes. If in previous texts examined most, if not all, referenced kingship as the voice of authority and Power, then is there evidence of a similar reference to kingship in this often-quoted 'myth'?

Kemp summarised the incantation text: '... the goddess Isis ("a *clever* woman. Her heart was craftier than a million men") schemes to discover the secret name of Ra, depicted as an old man who succumbed to the pain of a scorpion sting and revealed his hidden name to Isis'.⁹⁰ According to Kemp, the purpose of the text was clear in that 'it provides "historical" authority for using the story itself as a cure for a scorpion sting'.⁹¹ In other words, the story concerning Ra  and Aset  acted as a precedent; all persons who, after recitation and performance of the ritual may be similarly cured or protected from scorpion or snake bites, that is, if they follow the incantation ritual.⁹² On the whole, Aset appears as the main character; most scholars placed little importance on the brief reference to Hor  the son of Aset  in the final resolution of the 'myth' or to the preponderance of Hor figures on the various cippi. Therefore what is the evidence, if any, of an 'historical' authority?

The incantation began with the phrase, 'words spoken by Serqet', the scorpion goddess, *ḏd mdw n srkt* indicated that this particular text concerned a

⁸⁸ Joris J. Borghouts, 'Magical Practices among the Villagers' in *Pharaoh's Workers*, ed., Leonard H. Lesko, (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 122.

⁸⁹ Kemp, *Ancient Egypt*, 25.

⁹⁰ See Wilson, 'Unknown Name', 12-14. Kemp quotes from Wilson's translation.

⁹¹ See Wilson, 'Unknown Name', 12. Wilson's comment, that because the text was used as a remedy for scorpion stings, 'this use probably accounts for the survival of the text'.

⁹² Quirke, *Ancient Egyptian Religion*, 61. 'The mythic prototype [of the incantation spell] also offered a model of hope for mothers with child...'



The three forms of the sun god Ra
Fig.15 Left. Khepri pushing the sun over the horizon. It also signifies the name of Tutankhamun, neb-kheperu-ra. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.




Fig.16 Above. The sun god Ra at his zenith sailing in the solar bark.



Fig.17 Above. Atum within the orb of the sun god Ra sailing from the western to the eastern horizon. The name of Atum is written within the sun disc.

Fig.16 and 17: Papyrus unknown: Coming Forth by Day.

remedy for the poisonous sting of scorpions.⁹³ This confirms my earlier comment that, when speech is accompanied by a deity, he or she carries the authority and Power (*heka*) to bring the truth of the words 'into existence'.⁹⁴ In the earlier section of the Case Study, I also mentioned that the name of the king was similarly invoked in the 'offering formulae'. Offerings were made in the name of the king. I posit that the incantation text is a similar vehicle for the familiar Egyptian formula, the inter-relationship of earthly and cosmic communication: 'gods → Hor ← people'. In Egyptian society, the everyday dangers encountered by the people of Egypt may be alleviated only by recourse to the name of the Hor-king, who had access to the Egyptian deities.

Aset  who appeared as the protagonist in the narrative is described variously as clever, wise, cunning, rebellious, or skilled.⁹⁵ Hor is mentioned briefly with no reference to his character, only that he is the son of Aset. The text described the daily journey of the sun god Ra . He 'entered every day at the head of the crew taking his place on the throne of the two horizons [as Ra-Horakhty , an old man whose 'divine old age had slackened his mouth'.⁹⁶ Here again is evidence of Egyptian political syncretism; Atum, previously a creator god in his own right was now diminished to the aged status of the sun god Ra.⁹⁷ The multiplicity of forms of the sun god Ra were depicted in his three-fold appearances




⁹³ See MacDowell, *Village Life*, 118-120


⁹⁴ A similar goddess-authority was present in the Greek poetic versions of Hesiod and Homer.


⁹⁵ Wilson, 'Unknown Name', 12-14; MacDowell, *Village Life*, 118-120; Budge, *Gods*, 372-387.


⁹⁶ Wilson, 'Unknown Name', 12.

⁹⁷ See chapter three and the frequent references to the creation by Atum, for example, Pyr.600.

which complimented the daily rising and setting of the sun (Figs. 15, 16, 17). He was the god Khepri  who pushed or rolled the newly-risen sun over the horizon in the dawning of each new day (Fig. 15).⁹⁸ At its zenith the sun god Ra  was displayed at the peak of his Power; he was both the destroying heat of the sun and the light of the day (Fig. 16). As Ra subsided in the evening sky as the setting sun, he became Atum  (Fig. 17) the old man, the aged sun god of whom Aset as a daughter showed no pity in her desire for his hidden name. Because of his declining age, the 'weakened' form of the sun god as Atum dropped his spittle to the ground. When Aset saw this she scooped up the spittle with the earth and formed it into a snake.⁹⁹

The narrative continued.¹⁰⁰ While the sun god Ra  was on his daily walk, the 'snake' bit him and 'living fire ... raged through him'. Because he was unable to dispel the venomous poison, Ra appealed for help to the gods, particularly to the healing powers of his daughter Aset. She responded innocently: 'What is it, my divine father? What – a snake stabbed weakness into you? One of your children lifted up his head against you? Then we shall cast it down with effective magic. I shall make it retreat at the sight of your rays'. After some prevarication she asked the crucial question: 'Tell me your name, my divine father'. Eventually Ra confided to Aset that, although he was the creator of all that existed, he was unable to either relieve his own suffering or dislodge the lethal poison. The tormented sun god Ra eventually succumbed to his daughter Aset, and agreed to divulge his secret name.




However, he issued a proviso. Ra insisted that Aset reveal his secret name *only* to her son, Hor  who under oath, must promise not to reveal it to anyone else.¹⁰¹ The text reads: 'tell it to your son Horus after you have *threatened* him with

⁹⁸ The name of Khepri clearly demonstrates his purpose, in the meaning of the word, 'to be formed, or to come into existence'. Thus the sun god Ra, as Khepri is 're-formed' or 're-born' each day. The hieroglyph also depicts the image of the sun rising over the horizon , the result of Khepri pushing the sun into existence, to be re-born.

⁹⁹ It appears that this text may originate from different sources given that the text alludes to a scorpion as well as a snake yet the words are spoken by the Scorpion goddess. See Wilson, 'Unknown Name', 12. He suggested that the text 'came to be employed as a conjuration against the bite of a scorpion, and this use probably accounts for the survival of the myth'. See also Borghouts, 'Magical Practices', 122. His interpretation, that this was 'the first snake that ever was', implied that the narrative concerned the first snake bite.

¹⁰⁰ Wilson, 'Unknown Name', 13

¹⁰¹ See Borghouts, 'Magical Practices', 122. He proposed that the secret name of Re held the key 'not only to divine kingship but to control of the world'.

an oath of the god' (my emphasis).¹⁰² Finally, Ra , revealed his name to Aset  who recited the healing words: 'Flow forth scorpion poison! Come forth from Ra, Eye of Horus'.¹⁰³ Any reference to the character or function of the Eye of Horus, (named after as 'Eye of Hor') is absent from the incantation text. Nonetheless, the text infers an association between the scorpion poison and the Eye of Hor  when the poison leaves the body of the sun god Ra, Aset urges the Eye to 'come forth'. Because of the silence of the texts I must refer to other texts in an attempt to clarify the character and function of the Eye of Hor.

In the text, *The Destruction of Mankind* the gods advised the sun god Ra to send his Eye to destroy those who conspired against him but because the Eye was not strong enough Ra suggested that the Eye 'should go down as Hathor'. The Eye was considered a separate Power from the sun god Ra. In the *Contendings of Horus and Seth*, when the Eye of Hor was removed by Seth and later restored to Hor by Hathor, the removal of the Eye of Hor signified the loss of the throne of Egypt; restoration indicated that Hor was heir to the 'the sovereignty of Egypt'.¹⁰⁴ Finally, in the *Pyramid Texts*, Hor was not only described as the 'son of Ra', reborn every morning, he was also the Eye of his father: 'I [the king] am that eye of yours which is on the horns of Hathor, which turns back the years from me; I spend the night and am conceived and born every day' (Pyr.705). The Eye of Hor therefore appears to signify kingship with a strong connection to the sun god Ra.

The concept of the Eye of Hor is fluid and complex and to discuss the Eye further is to go beyond the boundaries of my thesis. Nonetheless it is a subject which merits further research. It is enough that my brief references to the Eye of Hor may



¹⁰² See Wilson, 'Unknown Name', 13. Wilson's full translation of the words of the sun god read: 'If there should take place a first time of (its) issuing [from] my heart, tell it to (thy) son Horus, after thou hast *threatened* him with an oath of the god and hast placed the god in his eyes', (Wilson's emphasis). See also Wilson's comment, 13,n.11: 'If Re had to divulge his name, he was willing that Isis communicated it to Horus, but only on condition that Horus be laid under an oath to keep it secret'. See also McDowell, *Village Life*, 119, and his translation of Ra's proviso to Isis: 'Tell it to the son Horus, when you have bound him by an oath of god, the granting of the god his two eyes'.

¹⁰³ Wilson, 'Unknown Name', 13. See also McDowell, *Village Life* and his translation: 'Depart, scorpion, come out from Ra, Eye of Horus, leave the god. I [Aset] am the one who made you; 'I [Aset] am the one who sent you. Come out upon the ground, powerful poison', 119. See also Budge, *The Gods*, 386.

¹⁰⁴ Griffiths, *Origins of Osiris*, 179. For the Eye as the crown and symbol of kingship see Lichtheim *AEL*.Vol.2:219; Wilson, 'Unknown Name', 15; Lichtheim, *AEL*.2:223,n.1; Griffiths, *Origins of Osiris*, 102; R.T. Rundle Clark, *Myth and Symbol in ancient Egypt*, (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1991),196.

shed light on the meaning of the final words. The incantation concluded with instructions on the use of the spell.

Words spoken over an image of Atum-Horus-Hekenu, an image of Isis, an image of Horus, written on the hand of the bitten patient, to be licked off by the man and drawn likewise on a strip of finest linen, placed at the neck of the bitten patient. The herbal remedy is the scorpion herb, ground into beer or wine, to be drunk by the patient bitten by a scorpion. ... Really successful a million times.¹⁰⁵

Given that the instructions for removing the poisonous venom centres on the name and image of the king, Hor  as well as Aset  his mother, then my earlier proposal appears justified, that the Egyptian people are healed only through the utterance of the name of the king. Of interest is that one of the names to be spoken, Atum-Horus-Hekenu is one of the names of the sun god Ra, which incorporates the royal 'Horus'. In addition, the *Litany of Ra* recounts the many names of Ra, for example, Horus is one, another is Aset.¹⁰⁶ Thus the multiplicity and complexity of the naming principle may be gradually unravelled when viewed through the subjective lens. However, a further complexity arises. If Aset already possessed substantial healing Power, then what type of Power was coerced from Ra, if not healing Power? I suggest that the names in the incantation text signify the greatest attribute of Ra, his creative power.

6.5.2 Phenomenology and an Incantation 'Myth' Re-Appraised

Close scrutiny of the text as if from the Egyptian perspective, revealed that the beneficiary of this sequence of events appears to be the office of kingship but only through what seemed initially as the active Power of the goddess Aset. It was through her 'persuasive' Power that her father, the sun god Ra, divulged his secret name to his daughter, Aset. On the one hand, her motives initially suggested self-interest. The Power of Aset as the personified throne and mother of the reigning king were now augmented by the Power of Ra. Given that Hor, the reigning king now also possessed the hidden Power of Ra, then the office of kingship is further empowered. On the other hand, the context appears more than a mere incantation text




¹⁰⁵ McDowall, *Life in Ancient Egypt*, 120. For the final sentence, see Wilson, 'Unknown Name', 14.

¹⁰⁶ Quirke, *Cult of Ra*, 31.


for healing scorpion or snake bites. Kingship appears as the predicate. The obscure reference in the text of the removal from Ra, of the Eye of Horus, may indicate the removal of the Power of kingship in which the Eye, discussed earlier, is associated.

I proposed earlier that the incantation text, the genre in which the scholarly consensus classify this text, may demonstrate the formulaic royal privilege of divine communication, that the people of Egypt may gain healing only through rituals enacted in the name of the king. Of key importance is the fact that the power to disperse scorpion or snake poison was not an aspect of the Power of Ra, since only Aset demonstrated such Power. Although Aset was exemplified as the throne and the mother of the king, the Power that she desired, the secret name of Ra, concerned an aspect of Power absent from her authority. I posit it was the conjoined creative power of the sun god Ra and the creator god Atum – when incorporated in the name of Hor the office of kingship reigned supreme.

Borghouts suggested that the sun god Ra is often the ‘object of downright ridicule’ in the incantation text.¹⁰⁷ There appears some substance to this theory given not only the image depicted of the aged sun god Ra dropping his spittle to the ground but also that he was powerless to the machination of Aset’s desire for his name. If a ‘myth’ conveys some measure of a living experience, then the incantation text implies a political statement engendered by the powerful elite to empower the king at the expense of the priesthood of the sun god Ra. On the other hand, although it *appears* that some concession should be allowed the sun god Ra. In the text, he insisted that his secret name coerced from him by his daughter Aset, must be shared with her son, Hor. If increased power in the office of kingship was the premise, then the text would need to reflect some reference to a ‘handover of power’.

Nonetheless there appeared to be some anomalies. The incantation text failed to indicate any relationship of substance between Ra and Hor, although I indicated earlier that the sun god Ra may also take the form of Hor. Previous texts and iconography examined revealed that the sun god Ra  and the royal falcon god Hor  were conjoined in the form of Ra-Horakhty  two gods as one. When seated upon the dual thrones, Ra-Horakhty sailed between the western and eastern

¹⁰⁷ Borghouts, ‘Magical Practices’, 123.

horizons .¹⁰⁸ The daily rebirth of the sun therefore activated the rebirth of the king; in this context, the sun god Ra was Hor. A further royal connection is present at the coronation of each king when he is given five titles of kingship. The first title of kingship is 'Hor', and his fifth royal title is the 'son of Ra'. In this context the titles of kingship reveal a supernatural father-son relationship, that Hor was the son of Ra. If a father-daughter relationship of Ra and Aset is described in the text, then in this context Hor and Aset are siblings.¹⁰⁹ Thus kingship again is the beneficiary and this apparent family inter-relationship sheds some light on the issue, that for kingship to gain his Power, the sun god Ra is required to be the victim.¹¹⁰

In my re-appraisal of this often quoted incantation 'myth', my attempts to understand the text in isolation have proved difficult and I have had to resort to other texts for clarification.¹¹¹ Moreover, the brief reference to Hor and the Eye of Hor in contrast with the dominance of Ra and Aset in the text, have failed to produce significant results, although the kingship connection is prominent. This serves to demonstrate that when one text is extracted from an ancient culture's myriad of texts, in its isolation the text fails to communicate the meaning of its more obscure references. Even with rigorous scrutiny, the various stages of awareness, insight, or intuition are also required. If anything, the subjective, insider view has provoked more questions than answers, if only because the characters of the deities have been an important part of my thesis research. Consequently, the questions act as a catalyst towards a wider phenomenological research, to compare the incantation text with archaeological evidence of Horus cippi.

¹⁰⁸ See also Wilson, 'Unknown God', 12. 'Now Re entered every day at the head of the crew, taking his place on the throne of the two horizons' that 'He [Ra] made his journey between east and west in his sun barque'.

¹⁰⁹ Here is an example of the fluid concepts of the relationship between deities. If the king at his coronation is named Hor, his 1st title and also 'the son of Ra' as his 5th title, and in the incantation text Aset is named the daughter of Ra, then Hor and Aset are *brother and sister*. Yet in the New Kingdom the Abydos triad defines Hor as the *son* of Aset and Asir. Our either-or Western logic has difficulty in comprehending the Egyptian concept of reality. Given the principle of the Egyptian naming process, that in assigning a name simply brings the named into existence then Aset and Hor are siblings in one text. Re-naming the relationship in a later text as mother and son, this also comes into existence. The reality of the Egyptians was fluid.

¹¹⁰ A similar model may be discerned in the role of Judas in the crucifixion of Jesus, the absence suggests the absence of the salvation doctrine.

¹¹¹ Cf. Borghouts, 'Magical Practices', 122. Borghouts describes the incantation text, 'The God and the Unknown Name of Power', as a 'well-known' myth' of which there are many variants down to the Late Period c350 BCE.



Fig. 18 On one side of the plaque Horus is depicted as Shed the saviour. New Kingdom Period.

Fig. 18 and 19 New Kingdom period, provenance unknown. c.1250 BCE(?)
 Drawn by Christine Barratt.¹¹²



Fig. 19 On the other side Horus is shown as the royal falcon god with the *pschent* crown of kingship.



Fig. 20 A pectoral of Shed the saviour standing on crocodiles and grasping snakes and other dangerous creatures. c. 19th dynasty New Kingdom. Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, Hildesheim

6.5.3 Horus cippi, Horus kingship and 'Myth': the Final Analysis

Horus cippi were so-named because the central figure, the naked child Horus, was depicted standing on crocodiles grasping in his hands scorpions and snakes and other noxious creatures. Most Horus cippi were protective amulets, some of which could be kept in the home, in a public place or worn around the neck for protection, whether for travellers or any who ventured within the vicinity of harmful creatures. The Petrie Museum in London has a number of such Horus cippi on display.¹¹³ The earliest Horus cippi dates from the New Kingdom Rameside period, but were widespread from the later Saite Period, c500 BCE to the Ptolemaic period, c300-30 BCE, then later into the Roman period. The Metternich Stela c.400, on display in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, is the largest Horus cippi found; the inscriptions and images on the Metternich stela are the source of most of what is known about the Horus cippi.¹¹⁴ It is important therefore to ascertain whether or not the Horus cippi in general shed light on my theory that kingship is the ultimate beneficiary in the incantation text.

Although the many forms of the sun god Ra provide us with some understanding of his character and role as the Egyptians depicted him, it fails to explain the presence of Hor on the many cippi. What is significant in (Fig. 18) is that

¹¹² From Quirke, *Ancient Egyptian Religion*, 115.

¹¹³ For Horus cippi at the Petrie Museum, London, see: UC16545, UC 16546, UC 16568.

¹¹⁴ See Scott, 'Metternich Stela', 201-207.

the image of Horus is similar to the form of the Egyptian god Shed (Fig.20) yet unlike the traditional naked form of Horus on Horus cippi in general (Fig.21, 22). In (Fig.19) rather than a young naked Horus on the reverse of the plaque, the king is shown in his royal falcon motif wearing his *pschent*, the double crown of Egypt. But he is depicted trampling on three snakes in the form of the Egyptian god Shed.¹¹⁵

Deeper scrutiny of the incantation text in conjunction with the archaeological evidence provides further information. Research indicates that the Egyptian god Shed the saviour, is attested from the Middle Kingdom, although the majority of papyri date from the New Kingdom period.¹¹⁶ Shed is first portrayed as a young warrior wearing a broad collar and a form of kilt with the typical sidelock of youth. His 'hunter-warrior' status is displayed in the quiver slung over his back. The sidelock of youth and the hunter status suggest that the god Shed is a 'youth' whereas the naked Horus with his sidelock depicted on the Horus cippi in general, suggests that Horus is a child.

The function and character of the god Shed represent him as a hunter of wild beasts of the desert including antelopes, serpents, scorpions and crocodiles. He was primarily a god of the people depicted on protective plaques, pendants or larger stelae sometimes placed on byways where such creatures threatened the lives of the Egyptians. In time, Shed became the lord of the desert and named 'saviour' because his actions benefited the lives of all Egyptians. The figures on (Fig.18) and (Fig.21) show the iconography of the hunter figure of Shed although both clearly indicate syncretism between the lesser known Egyptian god Shed and the Egyptian king. Both gods are seen saving the Egyptian people from wild and harmful desert creatures.

There is some archaeological evidence of earlier New Kingdom Horus cippi found at the Workmen's Village at Amarna. Kemp identified limestone stelae dedicated to the goddess Isis and Shed 'the Saviour' who offered protection against accidents such as scorpion stings.¹¹⁷ Wilkinson elaborates further on the Shed stelae

¹¹⁵ See also Quirke, *Ancient Egyptian Religion*, 115.

¹¹⁶ For Shed, the saviour and Horus cippi in general see Bunson, *Dictionary*, 246; Quirke, *Egyptian Religion* 114-115; Wilkinson, *Gods and Goddesses*, for the Horus cippi, see 132; for Shed the saviour, 135, the source of (Figs.18,19).

¹¹⁷ Kemp, *Ancient Egypt*, 304.

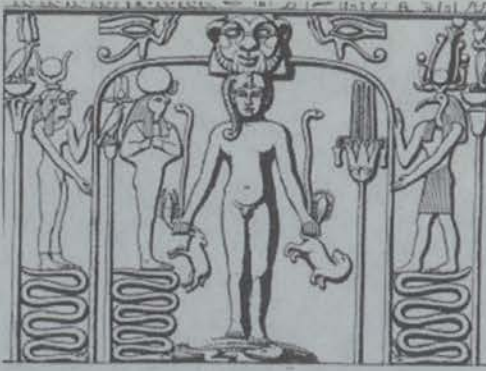


Fig.21 The Metternich Stela. The naked child Horus with sidelock of youth standing on crocodiles and wild desert animals. With Ra-Herakhty, Aset and the Eye of Horus, 350 BCE. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Fig.22 Cippus of the naked child Horus with sidelock holding snakes, scorpions and noxious creatures Ptolemaic Period. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

and confirmed they were found in a chapel at the Workmen's Village.¹¹⁸ Noblecourt described traces of Tutankhamun's presence at Amarna in the objects he owned and inscriptions mentioning him, particularly his reverence towards Aset, Atum and Shed.¹¹⁹ Although not at Amarna but on the road east of Iuni (Heliopolis), Quirke recounts 'a remarkable group statue' of Ramesses III inscribed with some of the same texts that occur on the Horus stela of Metternich eight centuries later. 'May the child live and the poison die then shall Horus be healthy for his mother Isis'.¹²⁰

The position of the cippi appears to ward off desert creatures from the city of Iuni. Wilkinson illustrated the 18th or 19th dynasty protective pectoral at the Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, Hildesheim, which depicts Shed holding in his hand the familiar snakes and wild animals and standing on a crocodile (Fig.20). The image appears similar to the traditional textual description of the protecting god Shed as a warrior hunter but unlike the naked Horus-cippus of the Ptolemaic Period in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo (Fig.22). In the latter cippus, Horus-the-Child is shown standing on two crocodiles holding the traditional snakes, scorpions and other dangerous creatures. Some iconographic similarities and differences are evident. The Horus cippi show essentially the same iconographic attributes of Shed; both figures are shown standing on crocodiles, grasping dangerous animals of the desert,

¹¹⁸ Wilkinson, *Gods and Goddesses*, 135.

¹¹⁹ Desroches-Noblecourt, *Tutankhamun*, 181. Noblecourt also acknowledged in the tomb of Tutankhamun the presence of Shed, 'like Horus the saviour' who would protect with the bows and arrows [the tools of Shed the hunter-warrior] in the tomb, any malignant forces, 254.

¹²⁰ Quirke, *Egyptian Religion*, 114.

scorpions, snakes and other noxious creatures which must be overcome. The purpose of both the child Horus and the Egyptian god Shed is to protect the Egyptian people.

One difference is that the attire of Shed signifies his role as a hunter and puts into context his sidelock of youth, that he is a young man defending the people of Egypt against dangerous creatures. In contrast, the Horus cippi depict the traditional 'Horus the Child' image, a naked child with the sidelock of youth. The naked child image appears incongruous as a protector defeating the creatures of the desert when compared to the young hunter Shed. Although the form of 'Horus the Child' demonstrates the protection of his mother Aset in the Delta, there is no reference to this mother-son aspect in the incantation text. On the contrary, Aset shows little compassion to her father on whom she inflicts the scorpion poison.

In the end, although there are other divine figures, the key figure on the Horus cippi remains Horus. The archaeological evidence is sparse and provides some insight into the healing and incantations in general. The cippi and stelae exist to protect the Egyptians from noxious creatures of the desert, whereas the incantation text examined concerned a different form of incantation. The suffering of Ra was the result of the machinations of his daughter; the scorpion was her weapon. Some syncretism appears likely, for example, between Shed and Horus-Shed and the role of the king as protector of Egypt and his people in the traditional 'smiting' motif. The incantation text, *The God and his Unknown Name of Power*, appeared to centre on kingship although the reference was obscure, given that the sun god Ra and his daughter Aset were the principle characters. The texts were silent on any deeds of Horus, but as I understand it, knowledge of the characteristics of Horus was assumed.

Resolution of the connection between kingship and the sun god Ra came from a description of kingship by the ancient Egyptians themselves. It seems to me to explain the presence of the naked child Horus as the key figure on the cippi and sheds light on the bond between Ra and Hor and offers a possible reason why Ra should insist that Hor share with Aset, the Power of his Name.

Ra has placed the king on the earth of the living for ever and eternity... The name of the king is in the sky like that of Ra, he lives

in joy like Ra-Horakhty ... Nobles rejoice when they see him; the populace gives him praise in his role of 'the Child'.¹²¹

Further evidence comes from the Old Kingdom Pyramid Texts of King Teti; 'Teti is Horus the little child with his finger in his mouth. Teti is the little child who can trample on you'. The concept of the Child Horus symbolises rebirth. Two thousand years later a similar text is written on the Metternich stela, 'It is Horus who has been stung, innocent child youngest of the gods'.¹²² I suggested earlier that the incantation text concerned the creative power of Ra; whether or not this was the Power desired by Aset, I return therefore to the first words 'spoken' by the sun god Ra in the incantation text examined, a formulaic tradition. Ra was self-created, that he created the sky, the earth and the breath of life. He had the Power to create in his form of Ra; as Atum, Ra absorbed his creative force. Moreover, the name of Khepri provides its meaning, 'to appear, to come into existence'.

The key to understanding the incantation appears first, a subjective approach as if 'seeing' from the insider view. When my vision was obscured and I realised that I was unable to understand the obscure reference to kingship, it was necessary to scrutinise other texts, iconography and archaeology. I realised also that it was inappropriate and not conducive to phenomenology to extract one genre of texts to the exclusion of others. Nonetheless, my final example suggested the centrality of the power of kingship in ancient Egypt. The office of kingship in ancient Egypt signified Power.

6.6 Summary

The first objective of my Case Study was to bring a conclusion to my research into the issue of whether or not 'myth', as a typology of religion was an appropriate classification for certain Egyptian texts. My second task was to confirm my confidence in my chosen phenomenological research method. Following van der Leeuw's object-subjective phenomenological method, emptied of its 'essence' of religion, together with Pike's similar, *emic-etic* model, I was aware that if I was seeking to understand the issue of Egyptian 'myth', then I required subjective knowledge.

¹²¹ Quirke, *Cult of Ra*, 20.

¹²² Scott, *Metternich Stela*, 203.

This type of knowledge is gained only through dialogue with the local people (insider or *emic*), and the researcher who acts as the observer (outsider or *etic*); my dialogue has been textual since the ancient Egyptians have been silenced over time. In the Case Study my task was to comprehend and analyse the research data gleaned from the Egyptian literature. Following van der Leeuw, various relationships were necessary: first, the objective observation and classification of empirical data. Next an objective < > subjective relationship was necessary; as a researcher (*etic*) I examined the local Egyptian texts to try to hear the Egyptian voice (*emic*). The next subjective < > subjective stage indicated the importance of an inter-textual dialogue where I assumed the position of the insider. This did not detract from the linking position of the local person (*emic*) whose voice (or texts) was the source of the knowledge sought by my research. Finally I presented an objective analysis which contained the subjective knowledge of the *ethos* of the ancient Egyptians. Only then did I have sufficient knowledge to assess whether or not there was an issue of 'myth' as a category of religion in ancient Egypt. For van der Leeuw, his subjective phenomenological method seeks to comprehend the religious data, where Pike argues that in his *emic-etic* system, the expert researcher after analysing the data then shares the information with the local people. In the end, the *emic-etic* system is more analytical than van der Leeuw's which is, as I understand him, human-centred. For example, following Pike, the local people may have no desire to 'analyse' their rituals or beliefs.¹²³ But both methods have similar, positive aspects.

Following van der Leeuw's phenomenological method, I concluded that most Egyptian texts referenced the name of deities, some more frequently than others. I argued therefore that a brief reference to the deities Maat, Horus, Osiris or any deity whose character was the signifier of the context of a particular text, was not to imply a measure of insignificance. For example, the term 'doing Maat' or 'like Maat' indicated *knowledge* of and compliance with her principles in life. Similarly, the Horus-Osiris axis infers knowledge of the functional aspect of socio-political kingship.

Equally, in the 'transfiguration' texts, there was an assumption of knowledge to the function and characteristics of the god Shu, when a brief reference was made

¹²³ For example in Headland, *Emics and Etics*, 34, Pike comments: 'But just as the outsider can learn to act like an insider, so the insider can learn to analyse like an outsider'.

to this lesser-known god. Knowledge that he symbolised the ‘atmosphere’ or ‘air’ substantiated his presence in the Opening the Mouth ritual in that the god Shu existed in individual human breaths. It was also significant that the name Shu was given to the tool used in the Opening the Mouth ritual, that it gave new breath to every Osiris-N. In my final example, the incantation text referred *briefly* to Hor, only that he was ‘the son of Isis’. Yet he appeared later as the key healing figure in Horus cippi, as if in association with incantation texts in general. Because my research gave me knowledge of the purpose and function of the royal god Hor as a manifestation of all reigning kings, I was aware that wider research into the obscure references within the incantation text, justified a comparative analysis of other texts.

Some texts mentioned deities in brief phrases that the royal servant ‘was supported and loved by the king’, who was described as a god. Other texts directed assurances to the goddess Maat that non-royals had lived, and royals had ruled, according to her principles.¹²⁴ I have demonstrated the key role of the divine king as the referent in the majority of texts in which all offerings, royal and non-royal, were made in the name of the king.

Finally, the transfiguration and instruction texts, quantitatively the majority texts, demonstrated a socio-political rather than a ‘religious’ context although all texts indicated the presence in some degree, of supernatural beings. Equally, in the context of the office of kingship, the king is considered a god and acts as the protagonist in most texts. This concept may fit within the general theory that ‘myth’ is a story that concerns superhuman beings. Conversely, I gave an example in chapter one in which the *Epic of Gilgamesh* described the exploits of the semi-divine Babylonian king, Gilgamesh. Dalley argued that because he was a real king, his name was listed in the Sumerian King List, then the Gilgamesh narrative came under the rubric of ‘epic’ rather than ‘myth’. A similar argument may be applied to the Egyptian king in his human-supernatural role. The king’s name was most often included in Egyptian King Lists. Exceptions, for example, included Akhenaten, Smenkhkara, and Hatshepsut; their absence indicated non royal status by the authoritative elite. In this context, ‘myth’ is absent from Egyptian literature.

¹²⁴ See Allen, *Middle Egyptian*, 43, and his claim that ‘there is hardly any text or inscription that does not at least mention one or more of the gods’, 43. Similarly, Lichtheim, ‘Didactic Literature’, 243-4; Lichtheim, *Maat*, 249.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

Name is no mere specification, but rather an actuality expressed in a word.¹

7.1 Issues Identified

My aim throughout this thesis has been to understand Egyptian texts from the perspective of the ancient Egyptians. My interpretation of the term ‘texts’, within the context of Egyptian texts, was in the form of literature, narrative or brief inscriptions, the majority of which have reference in some degree to superhuman beings.² Within this framework, Egyptian narratives were described in broad terms, and, on the whole, they served a purpose; ‘they commemorate, instruct, exhort, celebrate, and lament’.³ Different types of narrative texts examined throughout this thesis have demonstrated the functional nature of the two main genres that formed quantitatively the majority texts to which the ancient Egyptians designated the names, transfiguration (*s3h*) and instruction (*sb3yt*). For the Egyptians, the naming principle signified the function and form of their textual narratives. For these reasons, to impose the term ‘myth’ on the narratives of ancient Egypt is to deny the autonomy and validation of narratives which identify the local cultural identity of the ancient Egyptians.

This thesis began with an interrelated myth-religion issue, first, whether or not the taxon ‘myth’ was an appropriate classification for so-called ‘myths’ of ancient Egypt.⁴ The word ‘myth’ or the alternative term narrative text are interpreted within a similar broad framework. My endeavours to reconstruct the Egyptian past, using the phenomenological principles of *epoché*, empathy, and validation by the adherent, have resulted in a profound awareness of the holistic nature of Egyptian

¹ Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 147.

² I have excluded legal, medical or similar genres. See Allen, *Middle Egypt*, 43. He commented that ‘there is hardly any Egyptian text or inscription that does not at least mention one or more of the gods’.

³ Lichtheim, preface to *AEL*, Vol. I:vi.

⁴ Kirk, *Myth*, 207-208. He doubted that the term ‘myth’ could be applied to Egyptian narratives, that most of their accounts ‘do not exist in the form of continuous accounts, either tales or epics, but have to be reconstituted from prolific but fragmentary allusions in funerary formulas’.

texts. I became aware of the dangers of isolating texts in my Case Study when I found it necessary to refer to other texts for clarification of obscure references.

Further, to separate one type of Egyptian text from another, and in its isolation to name the genre 'myth', a term which carried the pejorative meaning, 'false', appeared to devalue the fundamental principles of the 'adherent priority' of phenomenology. Equally, the reality of the ancient Egyptians, as they experienced it, was invalidated. I have argued that because myths carried the overlay of 'false', it was an inappropriate name with which to designate the beliefs of the ancient world in general and ancient Egypt in particular. Finally, given that the texts of all adherents function as knowledge signifiers, any distinctions between the true and the false are not in the interests of those seeking to understand or to be understood.

The second part of the issue centred on whether or not 'myth' was an appropriate classification as a typology of religion, given the absence in ancient Egypt of any communal worship and the monotheism of a transcendent God.⁵ Although Christianity and the West are generally associated with the construct term 'religion', this is less so now than when the classical phenomenologists first used the term as the defining factor to compare religious data.⁶ This is not to say that the word 'religion' is a precise signifier of a universal belief system, given the absence of a communal system of worship and the multiplicity of deities in ancient Egyptian society. Equally, my research has indicated the absence of 'religion' in the Western sense when compared to the beliefs inscribed in Egyptian texts and iconography. Notwithstanding these comments, it is not my intention to deny the existence of 'religion'.

I have demonstrated that ancient Egypt practised a functional, reciprocal system in which the king made offerings to the gods. In return, the reigning king expected the gods to provide stability in the land, great strength to defend the land of

⁵ Cf. For no common worship in Egyptian temples, no public access, rituals concerns only the priests, see Englund, 'Gods as a Frame', 8. For religion and communal worship see Penner, 'You don't read a myth'. 169.

⁶ Cf. See Flood, *Phenomenology*, 2-3. Flood argued that while the academic study of religion has largely moved away from the idea of a common, perhaps transcendent essence, there remains a faction who hold on to the view of a 'spiritual unity' within religions, 'itself developed out of liberal Protestantism'.

Egypt and her people, and fecundity of the land to provide sustenance.⁷ The *Poem of Pentaur* described the Battle of Kadesh in which Ramesses II, single handed, defeated the Hittites. Because Ramesses made many offerings to the state god Amun, he expected divine support, as his words suggest:

His majesty [Ramesses II] spoke: 'What is this father Amun? Is it right for a father to ignore his son? Are my deeds a matter for you to ignore? ... Have I not made for you many great monuments? Filled your temple with my booty? Built for you my mansion of Millions-of-Years, given you all my wealth and endowment?'⁸

In the *Poem's* conclusion, Amun provided Ramesses with great strength in battle. The king returned to Egypt not only in peace, but also a victorious royal warrior, defender of the people and the unified state of Egypt. Equally, the iconic depiction on temple walls of kings offering the image of the goddess Maat to the gods signified a reciprocal relationship in the offering ritual. The royal statement was clear, that the king had established order in the state of Egypt, and that the *status quo* was maintained. In other words, the king was king not only because of his liaison between the gods and the people but also that he ruled according to the principles of Maat.⁹ Rather than 'religion' in the modern sense, the king practiced a reciprocal system where offerings were made to the gods with the expectation of returned favours. The beneficiary was the office of kingship, the symbol and key focus of the socio-political institutional state of Egypt.

7.1.1 Issues Overview

Throughout this thesis, I offered textual evidence to demonstrate that the socio-political function of Egyptian kingship symbolised the Power of the state of

⁷ For the functional aspect of Egyptian offerings see Emily Teeter, 'The Life of Ritual', 148-164, esp., the section on 'The Daily Offering', 150-1, in *Ancient Egypt*.

⁸ Lichtheim, *AEI*, Vol.2:65. For a detailed account of the source material of the Kadesh Battle inscriptions, see 57-72.

⁹ For kings offering the image of Maat to the gods, see the wall inscriptions of Ramesses II at the temples of Karnak, Luxor, and Ramesseum; Ramesses III at Medinet Habu; Seti I at Abydos. For the king to rule according to the principles of Maat and to maintain the *status quo*, see Emily Teeter, *The Presentation of Maat: Ritual and Legitimacy in Ancient Egypt*, (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1997). The Egyptian perception of the universe was in binary form as order (*maat*) and chaos (*isfet*). Similarly, the daily rising and setting of the sun denoted light and darkness. Equally, the annual flooding and subsiding of the Nile, whether high or low, signified famine or plenty. If the king failed to overcome chaos (*isfet*) then he was not ruling according to Maat. For an overall view of kingship see Thomas Schneider, 'Sacred Kingship', 323-9, in *Egypt: the World of the Pharaohs*, eds. Regine Schulz and Matthias Seidel, (Cologne: Konemann Verlagsgesellschaft, 1998).

Egypt. I demonstrated in my Case Study that the study of the Egyptian texts provided knowledge of a society within which so-called 'myths' or textual narratives were formed. The Pyramid Texts, as well as the transfiguration, instruction, biographical and royal texts were examples of primary Egyptian texts which provided not only source research information, but also knowledge that was particular to the ancient Egyptians. The interrelationship between the king and the gods, and the king and the Egyptian people, in the format, 'gods ↔ king ↔ people', demonstrated that the king was the liaison between the gods and the populace. Hieroglyphs, iconographic images and archaeology provided further primary evidence.

The myriad definitions of 'myth', and associated issues presented in this thesis, confirmed that the word 'myth' was a difficult concept to realise.¹⁰ Although a consensus of a clear definition of myth was absent, there was some agreement that 'myth' concerned 'a story about the gods' or 'a story that concerned superhuman beings'. The dilemma is that each story, *peculiar* to each society and grouped as a category of religion, shared the same universal religious overlay with other cultures. Although Wyatt also understood that 'myth' was local, that it was particular to each culture or religion, he suggested that myth was destined to continue as a typology of religion.

Anti-mythic views of this kind have at times been taken as axiomatic, as though the problem is over and done with, so that we can now get down to the serious business of an adequate, non-mythological study of the text and the religious beliefs to which it bears witness. Unfortunately, however, myth remains obstinate. Even apparently outvoted, it will not go away, and returns again and again to haunt us.¹¹

McCutcheon proposed a different approach, that the problem may be resolved if myth, as a category of religion, was re-described. Because myths functioned as a social construct, as narratives, they were identified by their content. For McCutcheon, myths were the 'ordinary human means of fashioning and authorizing their lived-in and believed-in worlds'; myths were 'utterly mundane' and should be assigned ordinary rather than extraordinary status. The consequence of a re-description of the term 'myth', he concluded, was that myths no longer would be

¹⁰ For interpretations by the pioneer phenomenologists see chapter one.

¹¹ Wyatt, 'Mythic Mind', 6. Wyatt refers here to the anti-mythic views of the 'biblical theology movement' discussed in his paper.

‘considered unique, symbolic, religious narratives’, nor concern superhuman beings.¹² McCutcheon concluded:

The implication of all this for scholars of religion is that if we take for granted the already established meaning and unquestioned authority of ‘myth’ – myth’s sacredness – we too may have come under its spell and, as a consequence, perpetuate a politics of which we may be unaware.¹³

As I understand it, the problem *is* the word ‘myth’ and to a lesser extent, the word ‘religion’. This is not to say that the myth-religion issue in ancient Egypt should be perpetuated. McCutcheon’s theory of a re-description of myth as a social rather than a religious category and Wyatt’s theory of the continuance of myth as a category of religion, appear as conflicting theories.¹⁴ Nonetheless, both admit there is an issue with the word ‘myth’. Rather than offering another definition of ‘myth’ to perpetuate the confusion, I resolved to seek knowledge through the source material of the ancient Egyptians; their texts, iconography and archaeology, in particular, knowledge of the existence or otherwise of a genre ‘myth’. Because the ancient voice has been silenced through time, I was unable to seek validation of my research with the adherents. Consequently, the Egyptian texts acted in my research, as if, they were the voice of the adherent. To this end, I researched vigorously the primary and secondary literature of the disciplines of phenomenology, the study of religions and Egyptology. Finally, because the local Egyptian perspective was the criterion, it was necessary to discard the common element of comparison, the ‘essence’ of religion.

My objective throughout my thesis was two-fold. First, that the results of my research would change the way phenomenology was understood as a method to compare belief systems. Second, the new approach to phenomenology would be a significant contribution to the knowledge and understanding of ancient Egyptian culture.

¹² McCutcheon, ‘Myth’, 199-200.

¹³ McCutcheon, ‘Myth’, 206.

¹⁴ See Lincoln, preface to *Theorizing Myth*, xii. Lincoln suggested a new classification of myth as ‘ideology in narrative form’.

7.1.2 Periphery Issues

One of the periphery issues identified in chapter two was the assumption that Egyptian beliefs were identical to the universal religious ‘essence’ which classified empirical data into typologies of religion. The removal of this issue in my Case Study served to rehabilitate the phenomenological method, to incorporate the beliefs of the adherent within a wider socio-cultural context. Because the concept of ‘religion’ was alien to the ancient Egyptians, the more appropriate term ‘belief system’ conveyed more clearly the context of their textual narratives. Given that the Egyptian naming principle was a fundamental concept in the culture of ancient Egypt, as evidenced throughout this thesis, the words ‘religion’ and ‘myth’ failed to realise the Egyptian ethos.

For example, I mentioned earlier that communal worship, a key function in the practice of the modern concept of religion, was absent in the Egyptian belief system. An issue of some substance was identified when one type of Egyptian texts was extracted from their socio-cultural context and studied, *as if*, that is, the designated religious ‘essence’ or ‘experience’ was the common identity of all beliefs. R.S. Ellwood explained:

[I]n the end, myth had to become mythology to be useful; it had to be studied and analyzed, and from it extracted what was universal and as applicable today as ever. This was tricky, for in fact myth in its original packaging is only particular and one dimensional. It is always a myth of a particular tribe or people, originating from some particular time in history, full of allusions to matters that would be best known to people of that time and place. Moreover, except in later literary versions ancient or modern, myths do not usually spell out the moral at the end. The reason why it is told, what it is about, must simply be known, perhaps without words.¹⁵

Ellwood’s comment re-affirmed my understanding of the original meaning and function of ‘myth’ discussed in chapter four. Textual narratives, stories about their gods were particular to the community whose authors not only wrote the texts but also had knowledge of the key rituals to which the texts referred. When Egyptian beliefs are reduced to facilitate a universal concept of myth as a typology of *religion* and grouped under a common ‘essence’ of religion, then the basic principles of

¹⁵ R.S. Ellwood, *The Politics of Myth*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 7.

phenomenology are undermined.¹⁶ If phenomenologists seek to comprehend the beliefs of the adherent, then the insider view should be seen in the context of their belief system.

For example, Egyptian scribes had knowledge of the functional relationship between the king and the gods; it was particular only to the Egyptians. I indicated in the Case Study that a brief textual reference to the god Ra implied knowledge of the link between rebirth and the rising and setting of the sun. Equally, the royal Horus-Osiris axis demonstrated knowledge of the perpetuity of kingship. If the words Ra and Horus were inserted into the 'sacred' texts of other religions or cultures, then their presence would be meaningless. The concept of the function of 'myth', whether verbal or non-verbal, a brief reference to, or a story about, superhuman beings in Egyptian texts and iconography, identified beliefs that were peculiar to the ancient Egyptians.

I have demonstrated a contrary view in this thesis in which Egyptian textual sources exhibit *kingship* as the centre pivot around which all aspects of the institutional state of Egypt functioned. Equally, the societal interrelationship between the king and the Egyptian populace demonstrated not only their emulation of the rituals of kingship, but also that the people had recourse to the state gods, only through the auspices of the king.¹⁷

When the concept 'myth' was classified as a universal typology of religion by the early phenomenologists, it may be deduced that various questions were asked of the empirical data which resulted in the taxonomy in the first place. If, as a researcher, my question concerned the religious nature of the empirical data, then I compared *my* religious rituals and doctrines with *your* religious rituals and doctrines. Does my question arise from a need to comprehend your religion as you 'experience' it? Alternatively, do questions asked of other religions confirm that my religion is similar to your religion, that the practice of religion itself is the common denominator? Similarly, if a comparison is made from a researcher who believes that

¹⁶ Loprieno, preface to *AELHF*, x. Loprieno stated that the contemporary international community of scholarly research was 'inspired by a number of guiding principles', one of which was 'to remain aware of the dangers inherent in any uncritical application to the Egyptian material of modern, but hermeneutically spurious methodological categories'.

¹⁷ See the Offering formula, 'Offerings which the king gives' discussed in the Case Study. See also Emily Teeter, 'Life of Ritual', 148-9.

his or her religion is the 'right' or 'true' religion, then the belief system being compared may be, by degree, 'lesser than' your religion?

These theoretical questions demonstrate the possible difficulties experienced by the classical phenomenologists and to researchers in general, to classify data into common elements of similarity. My research in chapter two confirmed that Christianity was the 'essence' of religion which identified the 'religiousness' of typologies. Consequently, when 'myth' is classified as a typology of religion, the texts or 'myths' of ancient Egypt acquired a perpetual overlay of religiosity.

Although I concurred with the difficulties of the early phenomenologists, I was seeking also to understand and describe an Egyptian culture which incorporated a belief system foreign to my own. Rather than grouping Egyptian texts into similarities within the common element of the 'essence' of religion, I sought to comprehend the data from the typologies designated by the scribal elite.

In Chapter two, the Greek deities Dionysus and Demeter, were a further overlay in Plutarch's version of the Egyptian deities, Isis and Osiris. I demonstrated that Plutarch not only identified the Greek deities with the Egyptian characters of Isis and Osiris, but also that Plutarch described Osiris as an earthly king. When I compared the Greek account with the Egyptian Pyramid Texts, any reference to Osiris as a king who once ruled Egypt, was absent. Rather, he is described always as Osiris, the *Lord of the West*, a king who ruled the Netherworld. Further, the Pyramid Texts provided clear textual evidence of the existence of a royal Horus-Osiris alliance, an ideology in which Osiris was the name of a superhuman king and Horus, the designated name for the reigning king, later transfigured into Osiris. Throughout ancient Egypt's historical three thousand year period, the royal Horus-Osiris axis of kingship remained a key element in the socio-political office of kingship. That the Plutarch version is often quoted in today's literature as if, his account of the Egyptian 'myth' of Isis and Osiris was the extant version was another periphery issue.

Further, rather than an earthly queen as Plutarch proposed, the goddess Isis was described in the Pyramid texts as part of an entourage of mother goddesses whose role was to support the Horus-king transfiguration to an Osiris-king. In the course of my research on the Pyramid Texts, I indicated the opportunity for future research. First, the cosmic birth rituals may be indicative of the earthly mother-child birth procedure of the wives of the king, where the goddess entourage may be an analogy of their human counterparts. Next, when the Horus-king denied his earthly

human form and parentage in his transfiguration to the Osiris-king, this aspect also may concern a cosmic-earthly parallel. A socio-historical aspect of the Pyramid Texts may add considerable understanding to the interpretation of Egyptian texts, as a whole. Finally, definitive research from Egyptian sources cited in the Plutarch version of *De Iside et Osiride* would add significantly to the earlier research by J.W. Griffiths.

In Chapter three, I re-appraised the so-called Greek origin of the false epithet of myth and identified the changing authoritative status of *mythos* and the consequential change in context. If the word *mythos* from which the modern term 'myth' is considered a derivative, that is as merely a word, then its meaning is derived from the context in which the word appears in texts, whatever the genre of such texts. As I understood the Greek meaning of *mythos* in association with *logos*, it was similar to the socio-political context of the ancient Egyptians, the purpose of which was to maintain order. The focus of Power and authority in both cultures centred on the institution of the state. The evident differences served to signify each cultural identity. Kingship was the central socio-political Power in Egypt throughout its historical, three thousand years period. In contrast, around the fourth century and later, Greek Power centred on the State, an elite-ruled democratic assembly.

The definitive response to the word *mythos* in Greek texts indicated that it was only a word. The word *mythos* itself was *never* given a false epithet, rather the context of *mythos* as a story, determined its meaning. As I understood the issue, *mythos* remained empty of meaning until the frame was given substance in its form, function and characters. I posit that the dichotomy of the true-false nature of myth did not arise from a Greek source *per se*. Rather I have argued that today's false epithet of myth is a result, in part, of the principle that 'my' story is true', 'your' story is 'false'; it is myth. Similarly, the myth-religion partnership appeared a contradiction in terms given the false epithet of myth; if myth as a category of religion is false, then religion is false.

In the final analysis, if 'myth' is a word, the frame of a story, the context of which concerns the deeds of superhuman beings, then no issue exists when the word 'myth' is applied to Egyptian texts. Then again, it is a complex issue when the modern term 'myth' is classified as a typology of 'religion'; the assumption is an exclusive religious context. If the term 'myth' is merely a word, that is, the context defines its meaning, then phenomenologists of religion have chosen 'religion' as the

context. I have proposed that this is part of the issue; the other is the false epithet. Consequently, if, on the one hand, the modern concept of religion is imposed on the beliefs of ancient Egypt and, on the other hand, ‘myth’ is given the meaning of false, then I posit that the taxon ‘myth’ as a typology of religion is a significant problem in ancient Egypt.

In chapters five and six I draw together the issues identified in chapters two and three and offer a positive alternative. A new subjective-objective approach to phenomenology, in which Egyptian texts were understood within the naming context intended by the ancient Egyptians, formed the core of the Case Study in chapter six.

7.2 Phenomenology Revisited

In chapter five the phenomenological principles of *epoché* and empathy were introduced as a prelude to the Case Study in chapter six. First I introduced critiques from scholars in the field of religious studies. I compared the critiques to diverse topics from the disciplines of religious studies, phenomenology, archaeoastronomy, law, Egyptian studies and archaeology, as well as a re-appraisal of the methods of van der Leeuw. My aim in this chapter was to demonstrate the positive aspects of a subjective-objective approach to phenomenology; the method was applied later to the phenomenology of Egyptian texts.

Rather than offering different theories of controversial issues in the phenomenology of religion, I chose to compare the work of scholars from different disciplines who applied the basic principles of phenomenology to their research. For example, the scholars quoted in chapter five appeared to demonstrate intuitive awareness of the insider view of their diverse disciplines. The overall aim of the different disciplines was to comprehend the data from both a subjective and objective perspective. Jane Harrison provides a further example of a scholarly subjective-objective approach to knowledge.

The self-questioning of Harrison may be identified as an ‘intuitive awareness’. Writing on the social origins of Greek religion, she pondered on the religious nature of the anthropomorphic gods of Homer and the cult of the mystery cult of Dionysus. Her initial self enquiry was the meaning she attached to religion. Later, rather than an objective approach, she suggested her ‘instinct’ informed her that the Olympian gods were non-religious, that they were posing as divinities. Her subsequent question may be compared to van der Leeuw’s ‘intuitive understanding’

as well as a subjective-objective approach to research in general. Harrison asked: 'Could this instinct stand the test of examination, or was it merely a temperamental prejudice masquerading as a reasoned principle'.¹⁸

Following the positive research of the different disciplines in chapter five, my aim was to test my new approach to phenomenology in chapter six. I mentioned earlier that my endeavours to reconstruct the past using the phenomenological principles of *epoché* and empathy resulted in an awareness of the holistic nature of Egyptian texts. For the texts to be understood from the Egyptian perspective, whether narratives or brief textual citations, I was attentive to the importance of interpreting the texts inter-textually, as a collective whole.¹⁹

Following van der Leeuw's subjective-objective phenomenology, in part, when applied to the texts of ancient Egypt proved positive.²⁰ Not only did I scrutinize objectively a large selection of published texts on ancient Egypt, I compared different interpretations of the translations by scholars in the field of a vast selection of primary texts. Once I had identified the different types of texts designated by the name, for example, 'funerary', I then re-appraised the texts subjectively in an attempt to comprehend the meaning intended by the Egyptians.

In my test case to ascertain the consequences, if any, of isolating one text from the collective whole of Egyptian texts, the results proved of significant value to my argument (Section 6.4). When I extracted the incantation text, *The God and the Unknown Name of Power* from the myriad of Egyptian texts, I had to resort to other texts and archaeological evidence in order to comprehend some of the obscure references to kingship.

The objective of my phenomenological method was to identify and comprehend the insider meaning of the authorial intent located within the ancient

¹⁸ Harrison, preface to *Themis*, vii.

¹⁹ Cf. See Baines, 'Egyptian Myth', 81. He comments: 'Because of the paucity of evidence [of myth], it is often necessary to combine material from widely differing periods and contexts in order to suggest a meaningful interpretation'. See also Loprieno, 'Defining Egyptian Literature', 42-3. He stated: 'For the historian of Egyptian literature, no text can really 'speak for itself': we always need the interpretative support of a *theory* of literature derived from internal evidence provided by the Egyptian documents'. For the comment that many religions shed light on the few, see Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, 143.

²⁰ Chapter five provides the initial impetus for my new approach to phenomenology following van der Leeuw; chapter six, section 6.2 details the method more precisely.

Egyptians narrative texts. Following my main reference to Pike in chapter five, I was aware that a cultural rather than a religious key was required to gain knowledge of the *emic* system of the ancient Egyptians. Equally, I argued that the *emic*, the local cultural, should not be compromised in favour of the *etic* approach, although to some extent, both were conjoined principles. Initially, an objective approach was necessary for a systematic empirical reconstruction and re-appraisal of the different types of texts within ancient Egypt's historical timeframe.

In my Case Study, using Egyptian texts and iconography as an example, I examined the translations and interpretations of the different genres identified by the conventional naming procedure in Egyptian literature.²¹ Although there was an absence of texts which may be described definitively as 'myth', the preponderance of texts contained references to superhuman beings, in particular 'funerary' and 'instruction' texts. After I had systematically evaluated the context of the empirical data and grouped together the major genres of texts, I approached the data subjectively, as if, from the Egyptian perspective. My aim was to maintain an *emic* approach,²² to seek validation from Egyptian texts that the conventional naming of texts conveyed the meaning intended by the Egyptians. One of the key principles of phenomenology was to understand the data from the local cultural (insider) perspective.

This is not to say that the objective-subjective approach to phenomenology demonstrated an either-or system. Following van der Leeuw, insightful, human research illustrated a simultaneous interrelationship. An objective-subjective awareness was present in the scrutiny of the data. When understanding of the insider

²¹ See preface to Lichtheim, *AEL*. I: vii. Lichtheim commented on the limitations of our understanding, the conjectural nature of interpretations, and the variations in translations of one and the same Egyptian text. For this reason I have drawn on a broad range of translations and interpretations and thus limited my examples to the resulting consensus. I have presented my arguments accordingly and offered only the name 'transfiguration' rather than 'funerary' texts as an example of the meaning intended by the ancient Egyptians. 'Instruction' texts, the other genre examined in my Case Study, agrees with the Egyptian meaning.

²² See Headland, *Emics and Etics*. For example: Given that there are many forms of the *emic-etic* system, 15, my understanding of Pike's meaning of *emic*, is its complexity. In his search for 'local' knowledge Pike envisaged the 'objective' researcher having a 'subjective' dialogue with the local 'subjective' person. He called this a 'subjective-subjective' dialogue. 'I [Pike] act as the insider'. An *emic* worldview is *emic* knowledge of a local culture, 33. He argues: 'Just as an outside can learn to act like an insider, so the insider can learn to analyse like an outside', 34. He considers that the *emic* knowledge is central to his system, the *etic* comparison of cross-cultural differences was also important, 38.

perspective ‘dawns’ on the researcher, it was a human experience rather than religious. I proposed that the meaning intended by the Egyptians was realised within the constraints of human perception. Consequently, when Egyptian beliefs are compared through the spectrum of the universal typology of ‘religion’, an overlay of ‘religion’ prejudiced the Egyptian identity. A similar issue was present in the Greek overlay of the Egyptian deities in Plutarch’s *De Iside et Osiride*.

I was aware of the importance of a constant re-appraisal of my methods of evaluating the texts; my objective was to ensure that I was bracketing my own value judgements. The various overlays I had identified were in some ways a reminder to be vigilant, that the texts under scrutiny should be examined alongside *epoché* and empathy. Due consideration was given always to the meaning the Egyptians intended. For example, the modern name, ‘funerary’ given to the various texts inscribed on the walls of their ‘tombs’, ‘mortuary temples’ or papyri may be appropriate to the modern meaning within a mortuary context. It was, however, inappropriate given the context in which the ancient Egyptians named such texts. For example, a ‘tomb’ was named ‘a house of eternity’ or a ‘house of gold’, and a mortuary temple was named ‘a house of millions of years’. The name ‘transfiguration’ was given to the rituals that allowed the Egyptians to journey into the Netherworld. The inevitable finality of decay and death implied by the modern term ‘funerary’, ‘tomb’ and ‘mortuary’ were in sharp contrast to the more active names specified by the Egyptians, ‘house of gold or eternity’ and ‘house of millions of years’.

The fact that quantitatively most textual sources from Egypt are inscribed on the walls or written on papyri enclosed within their ‘houses of eternity’ seemed validation of their belief in an eternal existence. I argued that the word ‘funerary’ failed to explain the meaning intended by the Egyptians. The name ‘transfiguration’ described succinctly the context and meaning, while simultaneously placing emphasis on the functional importance of the naming principle held by the Egyptians. ‘Transfiguration’ was the means by which an earthly being was transformed into a supernatural being.

As I understand it, in order to compare ‘the other’ within the classification of universal categories it was necessary first that I understood what was being compared from an objective position. Phenomenologists of religion seek to compare religions in order to comprehend other religions; the comparative process of

universal *etic* categories provided information on similarities as well as differences. For example, following Pike, in the comparison between the cross-cultural naming procedure between the universal typologies and the ancient Egyptians' culturally specific texts, the result was a more profound comprehension of the socio-political interrelationship between the office of kingship and the populace of ancient Egypt.

7.2.1 Phenomenology: The Socio-Political Question

As a result of my rigorous appraisal of the Egyptian texts any reference to the king in a religious context was absent. In the Old Kingdom the texts and rituals of the pyramid complex formed part of an integrated structure, a visible manifestation of the *political, economic and theocratic* Power of the reigning king. He was the model of Egyptian society. The divine office of kingship remained at the apex of Egyptian society throughout its historic era. Texts acted as a form of 'identity card' to justify the genre of 'divine decrees'. The priests who acted on behalf of the king maintained daily offerings and rituals to past kings. The living Horus-king therefore participated in, and perpetuated, the existence of royal divine beings through the ritual offerings. A continued royal existence in the Netherworld was dependent on offerings from the reigning king; thus the divine office of kingship symbolised the perpetuity in existence of the royal *kas* of kingship.²³

The instruction texts evidenced the dependency of all Egyptians on the king's relationship with the gods. Of some significance was the strength of the *social* belief held by the living, that the existence of their supernatural 'kin' was dependent on continued offerings of sustenance for their *kas*.²⁴ The social significance of royal authority was also present in the self-explanatory phrase, 'an offering which the king gives'. When the non-royal elite inserted this ritual formula in their houses of eternity, although they were emulating royal procedures, in reality, only the Egyptian king had the power to communicate with the gods. Thus, the insertion of the royal offering formula in the non-royal houses of eternity claimed the authority, approval and support of the king. Here was a socio-political bond of some significance – the king as the intermediary between the Egyptian people and the gods.²⁵

²³ See Frankfort, *Kingship*, 61-78.

²⁴ Conversely, if the 'house of eternity' was inscribed with texts or images of offerings then these offerings would be offered in perpetuity. See Quirke, *Egyptian Religion*, 152.

²⁵ On the divine nature of kingship see Allen, *Middle Egypt*, 31.

I illustrated also in chapter six an *historic* continuity of the Opening of the Mouth ritual, a causative ritual in which the transfiguration rituals activated the rebirth of the Horus king into the supernatural Osiris king. This ritual was demonstrated from its early beginning in the Old Kingdom to the demise of the state of Egypt about thirty BCE. The emulation of the *theocratic* and *political* authority of kingship adopted by the upper echelon of Egyptian society was a universal expectation, 'to become one with the god Osiris'. I proposed that the *eternal* nature of the Horus-Osiris alliance of kingship appeared to act not only as the divine protagonist in ritual transfiguration texts, but also as the key divine referent to which all deities appeared to show deference.

A complexity arose when the Horus king, identified as the intermediary between the state gods and the populace of Egypt in a socio-theocratic role, acted as if he was the protagonist in the Pyramid Texts.²⁶ This is not to infer that the Pyramid Texts may be a type of story, although they appear to have a beginning, middle and an end. The texts inscribed on the pyramid walls of the Old Kingdom kings of the fifth and sixth dynasty testified to rituals which concerned the royal transfiguration from the form of a Horus-king to the supernatural status of Osiris.

Similarly, in the Case Study, instruction texts evidenced the elite members of society who, in emulating the king, testified, albeit briefly, that they were 'loved' by the king. The implication of this phrase, discussed in chapter six, indicated that approval by the king was an essential requisite. A similar context indicated that the king was 'loved' by the gods.²⁷ In the final analysis, the dual role of the king was demonstrated in the majority of texts cited in this thesis. As a human-divine being he acted as the mediating focus between the people and the gods and in his socio-political capacity he was the authoritative Power in the state of Egypt.

Rather than the modern concept of religion, this thesis has demonstrated that the office of kingship appeared the supreme constant in Egyptian society.²⁸ In this

²⁶ See Ian Shaw, Nicholson, *British Museum Dictionary*, 209. Although the eldest son was committed to presenting the ritual offerings it was necessary for the king to intercede with the gods on behalf of the relatives. Shaw and Nicholson propose that this practice illustrates the essential role played by the king as the divine intermediary.

²⁷ For example, many cartouches testify to the king as the 'beloved of Amun', (*mry imn*).

²⁸ For the king as the pinnacle of Egyptian society, the link between human beings and the gods and his status as both divine and human, see Allen, *Middle Egyptian*, 64; Frankfort, *Kingship*, 51-60.

context, kingship may be said to supersede the typology 'religion'. My re-appraisal has revealed that the Horus king has emerged as the key protagonist with deities as the supporting actors within supernatural textual dramas. As Penner theorized earlier, a myth concerned the deeds of a superhuman being - the earthly-superhuman Egyptian king *appeared* to be within this category.²⁹

7.2.2 Phenomenology: The 'Myth' Question

There is a problem when certain Egyptian texts given the name 'myths', are defined as a type of religious text after being extricated from the preponderance of different genres of Egyptian texts and studied in isolation. The procedure may be compared to my attempted analysis in chapter six, of the so-called myth, *The God and his Unknown Name of Power*. My test case demonstrated that, in order to comprehend any obscure textual references, I had to refer to other Egyptian texts for clarity. Kristensen proposed a similar comparison. If one type of religious data was absent from a religion, the missing data was obtained from other religions. In a comparative analysis, references made to other Egyptian texts were resolved because the texts under scrutiny were identified within the ethos of ancient Egypt. When 'myths' of different religions are compared they are weighted within different cultural contexts.

For example, when texts, said to be myths, were removed from the Egyptian socio-political context, separated from their office of kingship, then, while detached from their frame of reference, they were classified and compared within so-called similar types of 'religious myths'. The meaning intended by the ancient Egyptians was submerged under substantial overlays of which the 'essence' of 'religion', or presuppositions about religiosity, was one. Another is the comparative method between so-called 'myths' of one religion to another which resulted in the quandary of whose 'myth' was a sacred story, and whose 'myth' was false.

The myth-religion partnership was alien to the Egyptian belief system in that the institutional state of Egypt was dependent on the theocratic office of kingship for its stability. Equally, there was no textual or archaeological evidence to support the theory that the Egyptians participated in a religious system of monotheistic worship. This thesis has demonstrated the presence of a multiplicity of deities. If the texts are

²⁹ See Hornung, *Conceptions*, 192,

designated as 'religious' in the modern meaning of the term, then the adherent's beliefs are compromised and the phenomenological premise of the autonomy of the adherent is defeated. Further, literature research identified the paucity of ancient Egyptians texts which may be defined as 'myth'.³⁰

On the other hand, a re-evaluation of the issue may offer some resolution. Given that a scholarly consensus on a universal definition of myth is absent, a general overview describes 'myth' as a story that concerns superhuman beings. I have demonstrated in this thesis that Egyptian texts testify to the presence and actions of superhuman beings. I posit that the term 'narrative texts', on the whole, may incorporate the meaning of the general definition of 'myth' minus the false epithet and the religious overlay. For example, Egyptian types of narratives were named: transfiguration, instruction, biographical and others. My point is that the premise of phenomenology is comprehension of an adherent's beliefs, given that the adherents, for example, the ancient Egyptians, lack any reference in their texts to the concept of 'religion'. If the voice of the ancient Egyptians is heard, they would be unable to validate the modern interpretation of the reading of 'religion' into their texts.

In the Egyptian context, the rituals and dramas were enacted by superhuman beings, whether deities or divine kings. I proposed also that narratives which contained reference to a *measure* or *degree* of any superhuman being may qualify in a general sense, as a type of 'text', with the implication that all 'texts' are not necessarily narratives with a beginning, middle or end. In this context, a brief mention of the name of a deity or a Horus or Osiris king implied knowledge of the character and function to which the name implied.

The incantation text, *God and his Unknown Name of Power*, discussed in chapter six is one example. The name, Horus, was mentioned briefly in the incantation, yet, Horus *cippi*, which purport to be the later versions of the incantation

³⁰ I refer to what appeared as an irreconcilable issue of what constitutes a 'myth' or 'epic' in ancient Mesopotamia, a similar question may be raised within the context of ancient Egypt. For scholars who have noted the paucity of mythical narratives in Egypt, see John Baines, 'Myth and Literature', 363; Bleeker, *Hathor and Thoth*, 16; Griffiths, *Origins of Osiris*, 1; Parkinson, *Voices*, 23. On the problem of categories see Loprieno, preface in AELHF, x. Loprieno stated that the contemporary international community of scholarly research was 'inspired by a number of guiding principles', one of which was 'to remain aware of the dangers inherent in any uncritical application to the Egyptian material of modern, but hermeneutically spurious methodological categories'.

text, placed him visually and textually as the central figure. A brief reference to the name of a deity or a Horus or Osiris king implied knowledge of the character and function to which the name implied. If textual fragments indicated mythic references of substance, then following the Egyptian naming principle, the name 'narrative text' is a suitable nomenclature to displace rather to supersede the name 'myth'. This new category of Egyptian texts both justifies and conveys the 'uniqueness' and Power of the Egyptians' relationship with their gods. Given that the general definition of 'myth' concerned the stories of a superhuman being or beings then I propose, following the Egyptian naming procedure, that *all* Egyptian narrative texts have an inter-contextual, *supernatural* relationship in which the socio-political and theocratic office of divine kingship played the key role.

On the wider issue of cultural comparisons, I discussed in chapters one and six the problem of when a narrative was a myth or an epic in the Mesopotamian story about the exploits of a semi-divine king, Gilgamesh. Because Gilgamesh was a real king and his name was on the Sumerian King List, Dalley concluded that the story was not truly about the deeds of a superhuman being; therefore it was not a myth. Consequently, the *Epic of Gilgamesh* was an 'epic' rather than 'myth'. A similar context is seen in the Egyptian concept of kingship. The king is divine in the context of the office of kingship and his name is written on the various King Lists. In this context to displace the term 'myth' with the name 'narrative texts' appears to be justified. The Egyptian texts described in this thesis, testify to the uniqueness of the narrative texts as the cultural identity of the ancient Egyptians. Equally, the polemic of the epithet 'false' is denied.

Although the true-false issue of religion is implied by the classical phenomenologists, this either-or approach to truth claims, as demonstrated in chapter four, is absent in ancient Egypt. For the Egyptians, each creation story was a variation in one form or another, with many layers of interpretation conflated to form the ancient Egyptians' worldview of 'truth'. The fluid true-false concept of their stories was peculiar to the ancient Egyptian worldview of reality and differed to the 'either-or' nature of the true-false concept of the term 'myth'. In the end, in order to understand the culture of the ancient Egyptians, their texts must be understood from their *point of view*. For the texts to be understood from the Egyptian perspective, whether narratives, texts or brief textual citations, I have demonstrated the

importance of re-evaluating and interpreting the texts inter-contextually, as a collective whole.

In summary, I have made full use of the existing translations and interpretations of the literature of the disciplines of Egyptology, religion and phenomenology of religion as well as extraneous literature on a selection from other disciplines. I reiterate my re-evaluation of the concept of 'myth' when applied to ancient Egyptian texts. If all texts contain some measure of a superhuman presence, then, in the broader spectrum of the term and within a holistic socio-cultural context, all Egyptian texts may be classified within the simple typology of 'narrative texts'. I posited earlier that the new hermeneutic of the word 'myth' allows the *concept* of myth, as a story that concerns the particular beliefs of a society, to return to phenomenology, minus its various overlays. I researched with some tenacity the reasons why the term 'myth' was encumbered with a 'false' epithet. If 'myth' is designated with the epithet false, and the word 'myth' is interchangeable with the concept of a 'sacred story', a term often suggested to supersede 'myth'. It may be argued, that the classification of myth as a typology of religion indicated an incongruity. The problem is that the taxonomy of both terms, religion and myth, remain essentially unchanged today despite numerous critiques from scholars in the field.

Bibliography

- ABDI, KAMYAR,
2002. An Egyptian Cippus of Horus in the Iran National Museum, Tehran. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 61, 203-210.
- ALLEN, DOUGLAS,
1978. *Structure and Creativity in Religion: Hermeneutics in Mircea Eliade's Phenomenology and New Directions*. The Hague: Mouton.
- ALLEN, JAMES P.,
1989. The Cosmology of the Pyramid Texts, in *Religion and Philosophy in Ancient Egypt*, ed. Simpson, William Kelly. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University.
2005. *Middle Egyptian: An Introduction to the Language and Culture of Hieroglyphs*. Cambridge: University Press.
- ANTHES, RUDOLF,
1959. Egyptian Theology in the Third Millennium B. C. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 18, 169-212.
- ARMSTRONG, KAREN,
2005. *A Short History of Myth*. Edinburgh: Canongate Books.
- ASSMANN, JAN,
1989. Death and Initiation in the Funerary Religion of Ancient Egypt, in *Religion and Philosophy in Ancient Egypt*, ed. Simpson, William Kelly. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University, 135-159.
1989. State and Religion in the New Kingdom, in *Religion and Philosophy in Ancient Egypt*, ed. Simpson, William Kelly. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University, 55-88.
- BAINES, JOHN & EYRE, C. J.,
1983. *Four Notes on Literacy*. *Göttinger Miszellen*, 61, 65-96
- BAINES, JOHN,
1983. Literacy and Ancient Egyptian Society. *Man (NS)*, 18, 572-599
1990. Restricted Knowledge, Hierarchy and Decorum: Modern Perceptions and Ancient Institutions. *Journal of the American Research Centre in Egypt*, 27, 1-23.
1991. Egyptian Myth and Discourse: Myth, Gods, and the Early Written and Iconographic Record. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 50, 81-105.

1991. Society, Morality, and Religious Practice, in *Religion in Ancient Egypt: Gods, Myths, and Personal Practice*, ed. Shafer, Byron E. London: Routledge, 123-200.
 1995. Kingship, Definition of Culture, and Legitimation, in *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*, eds. O'Connor, David, Silverman, David, P. Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J.Brill, 3-48.
 1995. Origins of Egyptian Kingship, in *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*, eds. O'Connor, David, Silverman, David P. Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J.Brill, 95-156.
 1996. Myth and Literature, in *Ancient Egyptian Literature: History and Forms*, ed. Loprieno, Antonio. Leiden; New York; Köln: E.J.Brill, 261-378.
 1998. Ancient Egyptian Kingship: Official Forms, Rhetoric, Context, in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. Day, John. Sheffield Academic Press.
- BAIRD, ROBERT D.,
1991. *Category Formation and the History of Religions*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- BALY, T.J.C.,
1930. Notes on the Ritual of Opening the Mouth. *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 16, 173-186.
- BARBER, ELIZABETH WAYLAND & BARBER, PAUL T.,
2004. *When They Severed Earth from Sky: How the Human Mind Shapes Myth*. Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- BELL, LANNY,
1985. Luxor Temple and the Cult of the Ka. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 44, 251-304.
 1998. The New Kingdom "Divine" Temple, in *Temples of Ancient Egypt*, ed. Shafer, Byron E. London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 127-184.
- BERGMARK, ANDERS & OSCARSSON, LARS,
1992. The Limits of Phenomenology and Objectivity: On the Encounter between Scientism and Practice. *British Journal of Social Work*, 22, 121-132.
- BJERKE, SVEIN,
1965. Remarks on the Egyptian Ritual of "Opening the Mouth" and its Interpretation. *Numen*, 12, 201-216.
- BLACKMAN, A.M.,
1924. The Rite of Opening the Mouth. *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 10, 47-59.
- BLEEKER, C.JOUCO,
1959. The Phenomenological Method. *Numen*, 6, 96-111.

1964. The Pattern of Ancient Egyptian Culture. *Numen*, 11, 75-82.
1973. *Hathor and Thoth: Two Key Figures of the Ancient Egyptian Religion*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- BORGHOUTS, JORIS J.,
1994. Magical Practices among the Villagers, in *Pharaoh's Workers: The Villagers of Deir El Medina*, ed. Lesko, Leonard H. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 119-130.
- BRAUN, WILLI & McCUTCHEON, RUSSELL T. (eds.),
2000. *Guide to the Study of Religion*. London and New York: Cassell.
- BROWN, DONALD E.,
1991. *Human Universals*. New York; London: McGraw-Hill.
- BUCHANAN, SCOTT (ed.),
1977. *The Portable Plato: Protagoras, Symposium, Phaedo, and the Republic*. Complete in the English Translation of Benjamin Jowett. Edited with an Introduction by Scott Buchanan. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- BUDGE, E.A. WALLIS,
1969. *The Gods of the Egyptians*. New York: Dover.
- BUNSON, MARGARET,
1995. *A Dictionary of Ancient Egypt*. New York; London: Oxford University Press.
- BURKERT, WALTER,
1985. *Greek Religion*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
1999. The Logic of Cosmogony, in *From Myth to Reason? Studies in the Development of Greek Thought*, ed. Buxton, R.G.A. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 87-106.
- BURRIS, JOHN P.,
2003. Text and Content in the Study of Religion. *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, 15, 28-47.
- BUXTON, R. G. A., (ed.),
1999. *From Myth to Reason? Studies in the Development of Greek Thought*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- CALAME, CLAUDE,
1999. The Rhetoric of Muthos and Logos, in *From Myth to Reason? Studies in the Development of Greek Thought*, ed. Buxton, R.G.A. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 119-143.
- CAPPS, WALTER H.,
1995. *Religious Studies: The Making of a Discipline*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

- CHADWICK, HENRY,
1993. *The Early Church*. London: Penguin Books.
- CHITANDO, EZRA,
2005. Phenomenology of Religion and the Study of African Traditional Religions. *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, 17, 219-316.
- CLARK, R. T. RUNDLE,
1978. *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*. New York: Thames and Hudson.
- CLAY, JENNY STRAUSS,
2003. *Hesiod's Cosmos*. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- CLAYTON, PETER A.,
1994. *Chronicle of the Pharaohs: The Reign-by-Reign Record of the Rulers and Dynasties of Ancient Egypt*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- COSSIO, CARLOS S.,
1952. Jurisprudence and the Sociology of Law II. *Columbia Law Review*, 55, 479-501.
- COUPE, LAURENCE,
1997. *Myth*. London: Routledge.
- COX, JAMES L.,
1996. *Expressing the Sacred: An Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion*. Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications.
2004. Separating Religion from the 'Sacred': Methodological Agnosticism and the Future of Religious Studies, in *Religion: Empirical Studies*, ed. Sutcliffe, S. Aldershot: Ashgate, 259-264.
2006. *A Guide to the Phenomenology of Religion: Key Figures, Formative Influences and Subsequent Debates*. London; New York: Continuum.
- COX, J.L. & SUTCLIFFE, J.,
2006. Religious Studies in Scotland: A Persistent Tension with Divinity. *Religion*, 36, 1-28.
- CRACKNELL, KENNETH,
2001. *Wilfred Cantwell Smith: A Reader*. Oxford: Oneworld.
- DALLEY, STEPHANIE,
1989. *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.
- DAVID O'CONNER, DAVID P. SILVERMAN (eds.),
1995. *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*. Leiden; New York; Köln: E.J. Brill.

- DAWKINS, RICHARD,
2007. *The God Delusion*. London: Black Swan.
- DESROCHES-NOBLECOURT, CHRISTIANE,
1984. *Tutankhamun: Life and Death of a Pharaoh*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- DOHERTY, LILLIAN EILEEN,
2001. *Gender and the Interpretation of Classical Myth*. London: Duckworth.
- DONALD, MERLIN,
2001. *A Mind So Rare: The Evolution of Human Consciousness*. New York; London: W.W.Norton & Company.
- DOWLEY, TIM,(ed.)
1996. *The History of Christianity*. Oxford: Lion Publishing.
- DUDLEY, GUILFORD,
1976. Mircea Eliade as the 'Anti-Historian' of Religions. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 44, 345-359.
1977. *Religion on Trial: Mircea Eliade and His Critics*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- DUNDES, ALAN, (ed.),
1984. *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth*. Berkeley; London: University of California Press.
- ELIADE, MIRCEA,
1958. *Patterns in Comparative Religion*. London: Sheed & Ward.
1959. Methodological Remarks on the Study of Religious Symbolism, in *The History of Religion: Essays in Methodology*, eds. Eliade, Mircea & Kitagawa, Joseph M. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
1959. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. New York: Harcourt, Brace.
1960. *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries: The Encounter between Contemporary Faiths and Archaic Realities*. London: Harvill Press.
1961. *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism*. London: Harvill Press.
1966. *Rites and Symbols of Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth*. New York: Harper.
1968. *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries: The Encounter between Contemporary Faiths and Archaic Reality*. London: Collins.
1969. *The Quest: History and Meaning in Religion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

1975. *Myth and Reality*. New York: Harper & Row.
1978. *A History of Religious Ideas*. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press.
1987. *The Encyclopedia of Religion*. New York, N.Y.: Macmillan.
- ELIADE, MIRCEA & KITAGAWA, JOSEPH M. (eds.),
1959. *The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- ELLWOOD, ROBERT S.,
1999. *The Politics of Myth: A Study of C.G. Jung, Mircea Eliade, and Joseph Campbell*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- ENGLUND, GERTIE, (ed.),
1989. *The Religion of the Ancient Egyptians: Cognitive Structures and Popular Expressions*. Proceedings of Symposia in Uppsala and Bergen, 1987 and 1988, Uppsala [Stockholm: S. Academiae Ubsaliensis Distributors, Almqvist & Wiksell International].
- ENGLUND, GERTIE,
1989. Gods as a Frame of Reference, in *The Religion of the Ancient Egyptians: Cognitive Structures and Popular Expressions*, ed. Englund, Gertie, 7-28.
- ERMAN, ADOLF,
1927. *The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians : Poems, Narratives, and Manuals of Instruction, from the Third and Second Millennia B.C.* London: Methuen.
1966. *The Ancient Egyptians: A Sourcebook of Their Writings*. New York: Harper & Row.
- FAULKNER, RAYMOND O.,
1998. *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*. New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2002. *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*. Griffith Institute, Oxford.
- FAULKNER, R. O., *et al.*,
1989. *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*. London: British Museum. Translated by Raymond O. Faulkner. Edited by Carol Andrews.
- FEDERN, WALTER,
1960. The "Transformations" in the Coffin Texts: A New Approach. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 19, 241-257.
- FILLER, A.G.,
2007. A Historical Hypothesis of the First Recorded Neurosurgical Operation: Isis, Osiris, Thoth, and the Origin of the Djed Cross. *Neurosurg, Focus*, 23, 1-6.

- FINNESTAD, RAGNHILD BJERRE,
1989. Egyptian Thought About Life as a Problem of Translation, in *The Religion of the Ancient Egyptians: Cognitive Structures and Popular Expressions*, ed. Englund, Gertie, 29-40.
- FLOOD, GAVIN D.,
2006. The Phenomenology of Scripture: Patterns of Reception and Discovery Behind Scriptural Reasoning. *Modern Theology*, 22, 503-514.
1999. *Beyond Phenomenology: Rethinking the Study of Religion*. London; New York: Cassell.
- FOLEY, HELENE P.,
1994. *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter: Translation, Commentary, and Interpretive Essays*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- FORMAN, WERNER & QUIRKE, STEPHEN,
1996. *Hieroglyphs and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt*. London: British Museum.
- FOSTER, & L., JOHN,
2002. Review of Ancient Egyptian Literature: History and Forms, Antonio Loprieno, ed. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 61, 310-311.
- FRANKENBERRY, NANCY K. (ed.),
2002. *Radical Interpretation in Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- FRANKENBERRY, NANCY K.
2002. Religion as a "Mobile Army of Metaphors", in *Radical Interpretation in Religion*, ed. Frankenberg, Nancy K. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 171-187.
- FRANKENBERRY, NANCY & PENNER, HANS H,
2004. There Needs No Ghost Come from the Grave to Tell Us This: A Response to Ivan Strenski. *Religion*, 34, 65-74.
- FRANKFORT, HENRI,
1951. *The Problem of Similarity in Ancient near Eastern Religions*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
1956. *The Birth of Civilization in the near East*. New York: Doubleday Anchor Books.
1961. *Ancient Egyptian Religion: An Interpretation*. New York; London: Harper & Row.
1978. *Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society & Nature*. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press.
- FRANKFORT, H., WILSON, J. A., JACOBSEN, T., IRWIN, W. A.,
1977. *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man: An Essay on Speculative Thought in the Ancient Near East*. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press. 1st publ. 1948.

- FROHOCK, FRED. M.,
2003. Sacred Texts. *Religion*, 33, 1-21.
- GARDINER, ALAN H.,
1923. The Eloquent Peasant. *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 9, 5-25.
1953. The Coronation of King Haremhab. *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 39, 13-31.
1960. Was Osiris an Ancient King Subsequently Deified? *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 46, 104.
- GEORGE, A.,
1999. *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. Allen Lane: The Penguin Press. Translated and with an Introduction by Andrew George.
- GORING, ROSEMARY AND WHALING, FRANK, (eds.),
1992. *Chambers Dictionary of Beliefs and Religions*. Edinburgh: Chambers.
- GRAJETZKI, WOLFRAM,
2004. *Burial Customs in Ancient Egypt: Life in Death for Rich and Poor*. London: Duckworth.
2006. *The Middle Kingdom of Ancient Egypt: History, Archaeology and Society*. London: Duckworth.
- GRIFFITHS, JOHN GWYN,
1980. *The Origins of Osiris and His Cult*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- GROFMAN, BERNARD,
1999. Modelling Juror Bias. *Legal Theory*, 5, 221-234.
- GUMBRECHT, HANS ULRICH,
1996. Does Egyptology Need a "Theory of Literature", in *Ancient Egyptian Literature: History and Forms*, ed. Loprieno, Antonio. Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J.Brill.
- HARRISON, JANE ELLEN, *et al.*,
1912. *Themis : A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion*. Cambridge: The University Press.
- HEADLAND, THOMAS N., PIKE, KENNETH L., HARRIS, MARVIN & AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION.,
1990. *Emics and Etics : The Insider/Outsider Debate*, Newbury Park ; London: Sage.
- HONKO, LAURI,
1985. The Problem of Defining Myth, in *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth*, ed. Dundes, Alan. Berkley; London: University of California Press, 41-52.

HORNUNG, ERIK,

1983. *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt: The One and the Many*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. Translated from the German by John Baines.

1999. *The Ancient Egyptian Books of the Afterlife*. Ithaca, N.Y.; London: Cornell University Press. Translated from the German by David Lorton.

1999. *History of Ancient Egypt*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. Translated from the Germany by David Lorton.

HUGHES, EDWARD J.,

1986. *Wilfred Cantwell Smith: A Theology for the World*, London: SCM Press.

JACOBSEN, THORKILD,

1943. Primitive Democracy in Ancient Mesopotamia. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 2, 159-172.

JAMES, GEORGE A.,

1985. Phenomenology and the Study of Religion: The Archaeology of an Approach. *Journal of Religion*, 65, 311-335.

1995. *Interpreting Religion: The Phenomenological Approaches of Pierre Daniël Chantepie De La Saussaye, W. Brede Kristensen, and Gerardus Van Der Leeuw*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press.

JAMME, CHRISTOPHER,

2004. Portraying Myth More Convincingly. *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*. 12, 29-45.

JENSEN, JEPPE SINDING,

2001: Universal Terms and the Comparative Study of Religion. *Numen*, 48, 238-266.

KEMP, BARRY J.,

1987. The Amarna Workmen's Village in Retrospect. *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 73, 21-50

1995. *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization*. London: Routledge.

2007. *How to Read the Egyptian Book of the Dead*. London: Granta Publications.

KIRK, G. S.,

1983. *Myth: Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures*. London: Cambridge University Press.

KRAMER, SAMUEL NOAH,

1961. *Mythologies of the Ancient World*. Chicago: Quadrangle Books.

KRISTENSEN, W. BREDE,

1960. *The Meaning of Religion: Lectures in the Phenomenology of Religion*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

1992. *Life out of Death: Studies in the Religions of Egypt and of Ancient Greece*. Louvain: Peeters Press. Newly translated by H. J. Franken & G. R. H. Wright from the second Dutch Edition, Haarlem 1949.

LAUDAN, LARRY,

2003. Is Reasonable Doubt Reasonable? *Legal Theory*, 9, 295-331.

LEEUW, GERARDUS VAN DER,

1938. *Religion in Essence & Manifestation: A Study in Phenomenology*. London: G. Allen & Unwin.

LESKO, BARBARA S.,

1999. *The Great Goddesses of Egypt*. Norman, U.S.A: University of Oklahoma Press.

LESKO, LEONARD H.,

1991. Ancient Egyptian Cosmogonies and Cosmology, in *Religion in Ancient Egypt*, ed. Shafer, Byron E. London: Routledge, 88-122.

1994. Literature, Literacy, and Literati, in *Pharaoh's Workers: The Villagers of Deir El Medina*, ed. Lesko, Leonard H. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 131-144.

LESKO, LEONARD H. (ed.),

1994. *Pharaoh's Workers: The Villagers of Deir El Medina*. Ithaca ; London: Cornell University Press.

LICHTHEIM, MIRIAM,

1975. *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings. Volume I: The Old and Middle Kingdom*, Berkeley; London: University of California Press.

1976. *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings. Volume 2: The New Kingdom*, Berkeley; London: University of California Press.

1980. *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings. Volume 3: The Late Period*, Berkeley; London: University of California Press.

1992. *Maat in Egyptian Autobiographies and Related Studies*. Freiburg Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

1996. Didactic Literature, in *Ancient Egyptian Literature: History and Forms*, ed. Loprieno, Antonio. Leiden; New York; Köln: E.J.Brill, 243-262.

- LINCOLN, BRUCE,
1999. *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship*. Chicago ; London: University of Chicago Press.
- LLOYD, ALAN B.,
1989. Psychology and Society in the Ancient Egyptian Cult of the Dead, in *Religion and Philosophy in Ancient Egypt*, ed. Simpson, William Kelly. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University, 117-134.
- LOPRIENO, ANTONIO (ed.),
1996. *Ancient Egyptian Literature: History and Forms*. Leiden; New York; Köln: E.J.Brill.
1996. Defining Egyptian Literature: Ancient Texts and Modern Theories, in *Ancient Egyptian Literature: History and Forms*, ed. Loprieno, Antonio. Leiden; New York; Köln: E.J.Brill, 39-58.
1996. The 'King's Novel', in *Ancient Egyptian Literature: History and Forms*, ed. Loprieno, Antonio. Leiden; New York; Köln: E.J.Brill, 277-296.
1996. Loyalist Instructions, in *Ancient Egyptian Literature: History and Forms*, ed. Loprieno, Antonio. Leiden; New York; Köln: E.J.Brill, 403-414.
- MARAVELIA, AMANDA-ALICE,
2003. Cosmic Space and Archetypal Time: Depictions of the Sky Goddess Nut in Three Royal Tombs of the New Kingdom and Her Relation to the Milky Way. *Göttinger Miszellen*, 197, 55-72.
2003. The Stellar Horizon of Khufu, in Bickel, S., Loprieno, A. (eds.), *Basil Egyptology Prize I: Junior Research in Egyptian History, Archaeology, and Philology*. Basel: Schwabe & Co., Verlag/AH, 17, 55-74.
- MASUZAWA, TOMOKO,
1998. Culture, in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. C.Taylor, Mark. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 70-93.
2005. *The Invention of World Religions or How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism*. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press.
- McCUTCHEON, RUSSELL, T. (ed.),
1999. *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader*. London; New York: Cassell.
- McCUTCHEON, RUSSELL, T.,
1997. *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia*. New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2000. Myth, in *Guide to the Study of Religion*, eds. Braun, Willi & McCutcheon, Russell T. New York; London: Cassell, 190-208.
2001. *Critics Not Caretakers: Redescribing the Public Study of Religion*, Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press.
- McDOWELL, A.G.,
1999. *Life in Ancient Egypt; Laundry Lists and Love Songs*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- MORGAN, KATHRYN A.,
2000. *Myth and Philosophy from the Presocratics to Plato*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- MORGAN, PEGGY,
1996. The Authority of Believers in the Study of Religions. *DISKUS: The Internet Journal of Religion*, 4, 1-10.
- MUJIBURRAHMAN,
2001. The Phenomenological Approach in Islamic Studies: An Overview of a Western Attempt to Understand Islam. *The Muslim World*, 91, 425-449.
- MURNANE, WILLIAM J.,
1996. *The Penguin Guide to Ancient Egypt*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- NIV STUDY BIBLE
1984. The Zondervan Corporation.
- O'CONNOR, DAVID, & SILVERMAN, DAVID P.,
1995. *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*, Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J.Brill.
- O'CONNOR, DAVID,
1995. Beloved of Maat, the Horizon of Re: The Royal Palace in New Kingdom Egypt, in *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*, ed. Silverman, David P. Leiden. New York, Köln: E.J.Brill, 263-300.
- OLSON, CARL,
1988. The Concept of Power in the Works of Eliade and Van Der Leeuw. *Studia Theologica*, 42, 39-53.
- PADEN, WILLIAM E.,
2000. World, in *Guide to the Study of Religion*, eds., Braun, Willi and McCutcheon, Russell T. London; New York: Cassell, 334-347.
2001. Universals Revisited: Human Behaviours and Cultural Variations. *Numen*, 48, 3, 276-289

- PARKINSON, R.B.,
2004. *Voices from Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Middle Kingdom Writings*. London: British Museum Press.
- PENNER, HANS H.,
1970. Is Phenomenology a Method for the Study of Religion? *The Bucknell Review*, 38, 29-54.
1985. Language, Ritual and Meaning. *Numen*, 32, 1-16.
1986. Structure and Religion. *History of Religions*, 25, 236-54.
2002. You Don't Read a Myth for Information, in *Radical Interpretation in Religion*, ed. Frankenberry, Nancy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 153-170.
- PETTAZZONI, RAFFAELE,
1984. The Truth of Myth, in *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth*, ed. Dundes, Alan. London: University of California Press, 98-109.
- PIANKOFF, ALEXANDER,
1934. The Sky Goddess Nut and the Night Journey of the Sun. *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 20, 57-61.
- PIKE, KENNETH L.,
1998. Etic and Emic Standpoints for the Description of Behaviour, in *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader*, ed. McCutcheon, Russell T. New York; London: Cassell, 28-36.
- PINCH, GERALDINE,
2004. *Egyptian Myth: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- PLUTARCH & GRIFFITHS, JOHN GWYN,
1970. *Plutarch's De Iside et Osiride*. Cardiff: University of Wales. Edited with an introduction, translation and commentary by J.G. Griffiths.
- PRITCHARD, JAMES BENNETT (ed.),
1974. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- QUIRKE, STEPHEN,
1992. *Ancient Egyptian Religion*. London: British Museum Press.
1996. Narrative Literature, in *Ancient Egyptian Literature: History and Forms*. ed. Loprieno, Antonio. Leiden; New York; Köln: E.J.Brill, 263-276.
2001. *The Cult of Ra: Sun-Worship in Ancient Egypt*. London: Thames & Hudson.

2004. *Egyptian Literature 1800 BC: Questions and Readings*. London: Golden House Publications.
- RAWLINS, D. & PICKERING, K.,
2001. Ancient Chronology: Astronomical Orientation of the Pyramids. *Nature*, 699, 412.
- REDFORD, DONALD,
1995. The Concept of Kingship, in *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*. eds. O'Connor, David, Silverman, David P. Leiden; New York, Köln: E.J.Brill, 158-183.
- REEDER, GREG,
1994. A Rite of Passage: The Enigmatic Tekenu in Ancient Egyptian Funerary Ritual. *KMT: A Modern Journal of Ancient Egypt*, 5, 53-59.
- REGINE SCHULZ AND MATTHIAS SEIDEL (eds.),
1998. *Egypt: The World of the Pharaohs*. Cologne: Konemann Verlagsgesellschaft.
- RICE, MICHAEL,
1991. *Egypt's Making: The Origins of Ancient Egypt, 5000-2000 BC*. London: Routledge.
- RITNER, ROBERT K.,
1989. Horus on the Crocodiles: A Juncture of Religion and Magic in Late Dynastic Egypt, in *Religion and Philosophy in Ancient Egypt*, ed. Simpson, William Kelly. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University, 103-116.
- ROMER, JOHN,
2000. *Great Expectations: John Romer's History of Excavation*. London: Cassell.
- ROTH, ANN MACY,
1992. The Peseshkef and the 'Opening of the Mouth' Ceremony: A Ritual of Birth and Rebirth. *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 78, 113-147.
- SATLOW, MICHAEL L.,
2005. Disappearing Categories: Using Categories in the Study of Religion. *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, 17(4), 287-298.
- SCHNEIDER, THOMAS,
1998. Sacred Kingship, in *Egypt: The World of the Pharaohs*, eds. Schulz, Regine & Seidel, Matthias Cologne: Konemann Verlagsgesellschaft, 323-329.
- SCOTT, NORA E.,
1951. Metternich Stela. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, 9, 201-217.
- SEGAL, ROBERT A.,
1998. *The Myth and Ritual Theory: An Anthology*. Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell.

1999. In Defense of Reductionalism, in *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion*, ed. T. McCutcheon, Russell. New York; London: Cassell, 1999), 139-163.
2004. *Myth: A Very Short Introduction*, New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2006. All Generalizations Are Bad: Postmodernism on Theories. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 74, 157-171.
- SHAFFER, BYRON E.,
1991. *Religion in Ancient Egypt: Gods, Myths, and Personal Practice*. London: Routledge.
1998. *Temples of Ancient Egypt*. London; New York: I.B. Tauris.
- SHARPE, ERIC J.,
1975. *Comparative Religion: A History*. London: Duckworth.
- SHAW, IAN & NICOLSON, PAUL,
1995. *British Museum Dictionary of Ancient Egypt*. London: British Museum Press.
- SILVERMAN, DAVID P.,
1989. Textual Criticism in the Coffin Texts, in *Religion and Philosophy in Ancient Egypt*, ed. Simpson, William Kelly. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University, 29-46.
1991. Divinity and Deities in Ancient Egypt, in *Religion in Ancient Egypt*, ed. Shafer, Byron E. London: Routledge, 7-87.
1995. The Nature of Egyptian Kingship, in *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*, eds., O'Connor, David and Silverman, David P. Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J.Brill, 49-94.
- SILVERMAN, DAVID P (ed.),
1997. *Ancient Egypt*, London: Duncan Baird Publishers.
- SIMPSON, WILLIAM KELLY (ed.),
1989. *Religion and Philosophy in Ancient Egypt*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University
- SIMPSON, WILLIAM KELLY,
1996. Belles Lettres and Propaganda, in *Ancient Egyptian Literature: History and Forms*, ed. Loprieno, Antonio. Leiden; New York; Köln: E.J.Brill, 435-443.
2003. *The Literature of Ancient Egypt; an Anthology of Stories, Instructions, Stelae, Autobiographies, and Poetry*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press.
- SMART, NINIAN,
1973. *The Phenomenon of Religion*, London: MacMillan Press.
1979. *The Religious Experience of Mankind*, London: Collins

SMITH, JONATHAN Z.,

1978. *Map Is Not Territory, Studies in the History of Religion*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.

1987. *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

1996. A Matter of Class: Taxonomies of Religion. *Harvard Theological Review*, 89, 387-403.

1998. Religion, Religions, Religious, in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Taylor, Mark C. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 269-284.

2000. Classification, in *Guide to the Study of Religion*, ed. W. Braun, R.T. McCutcheon. New York; London: Cassell, 35-44.

SMITH, M.,

1993. *The Liturgy of Opening the Mouth for Breathing*, Oxford: Griffiths Institute.

SMITH, WILFRED CANTWELL,

1959. Comparative Religions: Whither and Why?, in *History of Religions: Essays in Methodology*, ed. M. Eliade, M and Kitagawa, J.M. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 31-58.

1978. *The Meaning and End of Religion*. London: S.P.C.K.

1980. Belief: A Reply to a Response. *Numen*, 27, 247-255.

2001. The Sky Is a Cow, in *Wilfred Cantwell Smith: A Reader*, ed. Cracknell, Kenneth. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 46-51.

SPENCE, KATE,

2000. Ancient Chronology: Astronomical Orientation of the Pyramids. *Nature*, 408, 320-324.

2001. Ancient Chronology: Astronomical Orientation of the Pyramids. *Nature*, 412, 699-700.

SPENCE, LEWIS,

1994. *Egypt: Myths and Legends*. London: Studio Editions. 1st publ. Harrap, 1915.

SPENCER, A. J.,

1982. *Death in Ancient Egypt*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

STODDARD, KATHRYN,

2004. *The Narrative Voice in the Theogony of Hesiod*. Leiden; Boston: Brill.

STRENSKI, IVAN,

1987. *Four Theories of Myth in Twentieth-Century History: Cassirer, Eliade, Lévi-Strauss and Malinowski*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

2004. Horatio and the Terminator: A Review Essay of Radical Interpretation in Religion. *Religion*, 34, 53-64.
- STRUDWICK, NIGEL C.,
2005. *Texts from the Pyramid Age*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature.
- STUDSTILL, RANDALL,
2000. Eliade, Phenomenology, and the Sacred. *Religious Studies*, 36, 177-194.
- SUTCLIFFE, STEVEN (ed.)
2004. *Religion: Empirical Studies*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- TAYLOR, MARK C. (ed.)
1998. *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press.
- TEETER, EMILY,
1997. The Life of Ritual, in *Ancient Egypt*. Silverman, David P. London: Duncan Baird Publishers, 148-164.
1997. *The Presentation of Maat: Ritual and Legitimacy in Ancient Egypt*. Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.
- TITE, PHILIP L.,
2004. Naming or Defining? On the Necessity of Reduction in Religious Studies. *Culture and Religion*, 5, 339-365.
- TOBIN, VINCENT A.,
2003. Selections from the Pyramid Texts, in *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, ed. Simpson, William Kelly. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 247-262.
- TRIGGER, BRUCE G.,
1983. *Ancient Egypt: A Social History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University press.
1996. *Early Civilizations: Ancient Egypt in Context*. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press.
- TROY, LANA,
1986. *Patterns of Queenship in Ancient Egyptian Myth and History*. Uppsala Stockholm: (Universitetet); Almqvist & Wiksell International distributors.
- WAARDENBURG, JACQUES,
1972. Religion between Reality and Idea: A Century of Phenomenology of Religion in the Netherlands. *Numen*, 19, 128-203.
1978. *Reflections on the Study of Religion: Including an Essay on the Work of Gerardus Van Der Leeuw*. The Hague: Mouton.

1999. *Classical Approaches to the Study of Religion: Aims, Methods and Theories of Research*. New York: W. de Gruyter.
- WENTE, EDWARD F.,
1982. Mysticism in Pharaonic Egypt? *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 41, 161-179.
- WEST, M.L. (ed.),
1966. *Hesiod's Theogony*, Edited with Prolegomena and Commentary by M.L. West, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- WEST, M.L. (ed.),
1988. *Hesiod's Theogony and Works and Days*. Translated with an Introduction and Notes by M.L. West, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- WHALING, FRANK,
1986. *Christian Theology and World Religions: A Global Approach*, Basingstoke: Marshall Pickering.
- WIEBE, DONALD,
1979. The Role of 'Belief' in the Study of Religion: A Response to W.C. Smith. *Numen*, 26, 234-249.
- WILKINSON, RICHARD H.,
1992. *Reading Egyptian Art: A Hieroglyphic Guide to Ancient Egyptian Painting and Sculpture*. London: Thames & Hudson.
1999. *Symbolic and Magic in Ancient Egyptian Art*. London: Thames and Hudson.
2000. *The Complete Temples of Ancient Egypt*. New York, N.Y.: Thames and Hudson.
2003. *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- WILLIAMS, R.J.,
1981. The Sages of Ancient Egypt in the Light of Recent Scholarship. *Journal of American Oriental Society*, 101, 1-19.
- WILSON, JOHN,
1977. The Function of the State, in *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man: An Essay on Speculative Thought in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Henri Frankfort, et al. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 62-92.
1977. The God and His Unknown Name of Power, in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, ed. J.B. Pritchard. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 12-14.
- WITT, R.E.,
1972. Plutarch's De Iside Et Osiride. *The Classical Review*, 22, 207-209.

WYATT, N.,

1996. *Myths of Power: A Study of Royal Myth and Ideology in Ugaritic and Biblical Tradition*. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag.

2001. The Mythic Mind. *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*, 15, 3-56.

2001. *Space and Time in the Religious Life of the near East*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

YEGDICH, TANIA,

1999. On the Phenomenology of Empathy in Nursing: Empathy or Sympathy? *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 30, 83-93.

THEBAN MAPPING PROJECT - <http://www.Thebanmappingproject.com>

PETRIE MUSEUM OF EGYPTIAN ARCHAEOLOGY - <http://www.petrie.ucl.ac.uk>

Appendix

**Richard Dawkins with Muriel Gray, Friday, 19 August 2005,
Edinburgh International Book Festival**

URL: <http://www.edbookfest.co.uk/readings/archive05.html#k>

Questions from the audience:

Extract:

I was interested to hear about your new book. I wonder what you think about the theory that religion itself is an evolutionary tool. I have read studies that say that religious people are generally happier, that they may live longer and that they have fewer serious illnesses. Do you think that that is that a scientific fact or is it just a random theory?

Richard Dawkins: Whether that is factually true is one question—some studies seem to suggest that it is but others suggest that it isn't. It would not surprise me in the least if it was true. It is quite likely; since psychosomatic illness is so important and stress has such an important effect on health, it could well be the case that people who manage to retain throughout adulthood the equivalent of a childhood imaginary friend might suffer less stress as a consequence. They might well live longer and be less susceptible to duodenal ulcers or goodness knows what. I wouldn't be surprised about that.

I would say two things, however. First, this is too obvious to say to a sophisticated audience like this one, but there might be people who think that because religion makes you healthier and freer from stress that somehow makes it true. Obviously, that's not the case. It's not logical.

The second thing is the question that the questioner asked, which is whether it could be a Darwinian adaptation. Every single civilisation in the world has religion, as far as I am aware. That doesn't mean that every individual is religious, but religion is part of the norms of the culture of every people that has ever been looked at. It looks as if it is in some sense a Darwinian adaptation. Could the reason why religion is so ubiquitous be its beneficial effects on health, if such they be? I suppose it just about could, but it doesn't sound to me like a strong and big enough theory to account for the enormously important, ubiquitous phenomenon of religion. I think that there is more to it than that. I don't think that protection of a minor statistical kind from psychosomatic illness is a strong enough

effect to be the reason why we have religion (if indeed that protection is there at all; I perhaps bent over backwards to concede the fact too readily, given that it is highly disputed.) There's got to be some other reason.

Muriel Gray: Do you have any theories about what it might be?

Richard Dawkins: Yes. I think you have to rephrase the question. Biologists are accustomed, when they are confronted with a puzzling piece of behaviour, to asking, "What is its Darwinian survival value? Why is it there? Why do these animals do it?" Sometimes that is the wrong question. Sometimes you are focusing on the wrong thing when you ask that question.

A good illustration of that is the habit that insects show at night of flying into candle flames. We all know that behaviour and it would be tempting to say that it is suicidal, self-immolation or self-sacrificial behaviour. What is the survival value of a moth committing suicide by flying into a candle flame? However, I think that that is the wrong way to express the question. Instead, we have to ask, "What is going on in the moth's nervous system when it flies into a candle flame?" Maybe it is something like the following.

In nature, before candles and artificial light were invented, the only light that a night-flying moth would ever see would be the stars and the moon, which are at optical infinity. Insects are known to use light as a compass. Day-flying insects use the sun as a compass and night-flying insects use the moon and the stars. Light from celestial objects is at optical infinity, which means that the light rays are parallel. A rule of thumb in the nervous system that tells the insect to maintain, let's say, a 30 degree angle to the light rays will cause the insect to fly in a straight line. That is a useful thing to do and many insects are known to do exactly that.

Suddenly—by evolutionary standards—candles appear on the scene. The same rule is in the insect's nervous system. The moth behaves towards the candle as though it was the moon. It maintains a 30 degree angle to rays that are not at optical infinity but are radiating out from a candle flame. That rule will cause the moth to describe a neat, logarithmic spiral into the candle flame.

We have rephrased the question. Instead of saying, "What is the survival value of suicidal behaviour?" we have said, "What is the survival value of maintaining a fixed angle to light rays?" We have a very good survival value for that. We phrased the

question wrongly when we talked about suicidal behaviour. I think that religion is like that. The rephrasing of the question might be something like this: “What is it in the child brain that would benefit by doing something that might manifest itself as religion?” That is the parallel question to the one about the moth flying into the candle flame.

Children need to believe what adults—especially their parents—tell them. A child cannot afford to use the experimental method to decide how to survive. If the parent says “Don’t go into the jungle because you’ll be eaten”, the child had better believe that. Children are born with a rule of thumb in their brain that tells them to believe what their parents tell them.

Parents pass on to their children what their parents told them. In turn, the parents got it from their parents.

It’s a bit like computer viruses. A computer is an electronic machine that is wired up in such a way that it obeys whatever it is told to do, provided that that is written in the right language. In a sense, computers believe what they are told. They have to, or they couldn’t do useful things like word processing or spreadsheets. But a computer that is wired up to obey instructions for doing useful things like word processing cannot help obeying when it is given bad instructions like “erase the contents of the hard disc, and before you do that pass me on to another computer” or something equally malevolent. That is what a computer virus does.

The possibility of computer viruses is a necessary consequence of the fact that computers are programmable machines. Human children are programmable machines too, for very good reasons, and their brains are equally vulnerable to viruses. I think that that is what religion is. It is a brain virus that gets passed from generation to generation. Sometimes it gets passed sideways within one generation when a particularly charismatic preacher like John Wesley or Billy Graham starts to have great revival meetings and infects people with the virus. There is an epidemiology of brain viruses—they are not genetic viruses, obviously—and I think that that is exactly what religions are, although they are somewhat more complicated than that. The reason why our brains are so vulnerable is that they are programmable machines, for very good reasons.